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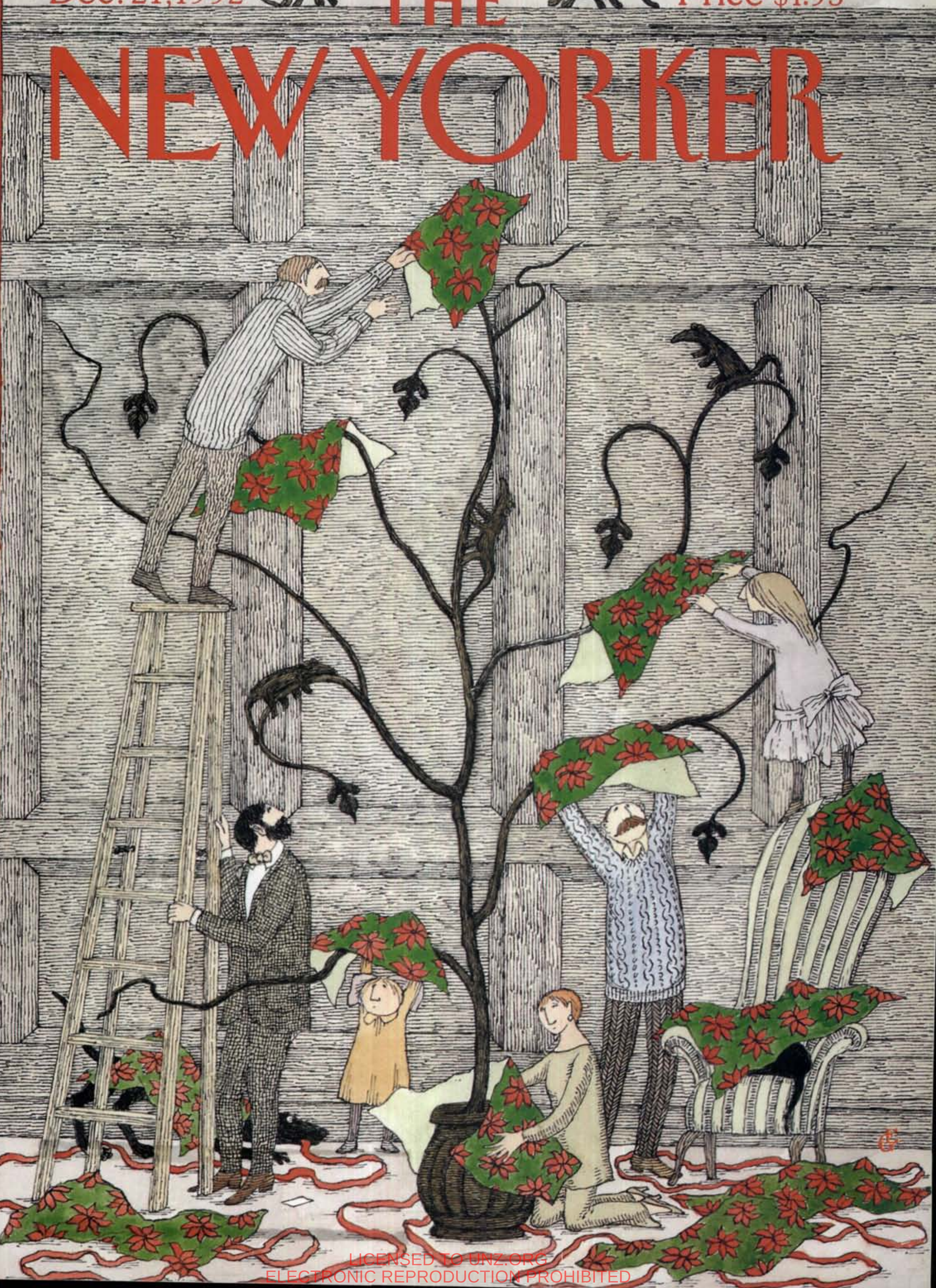

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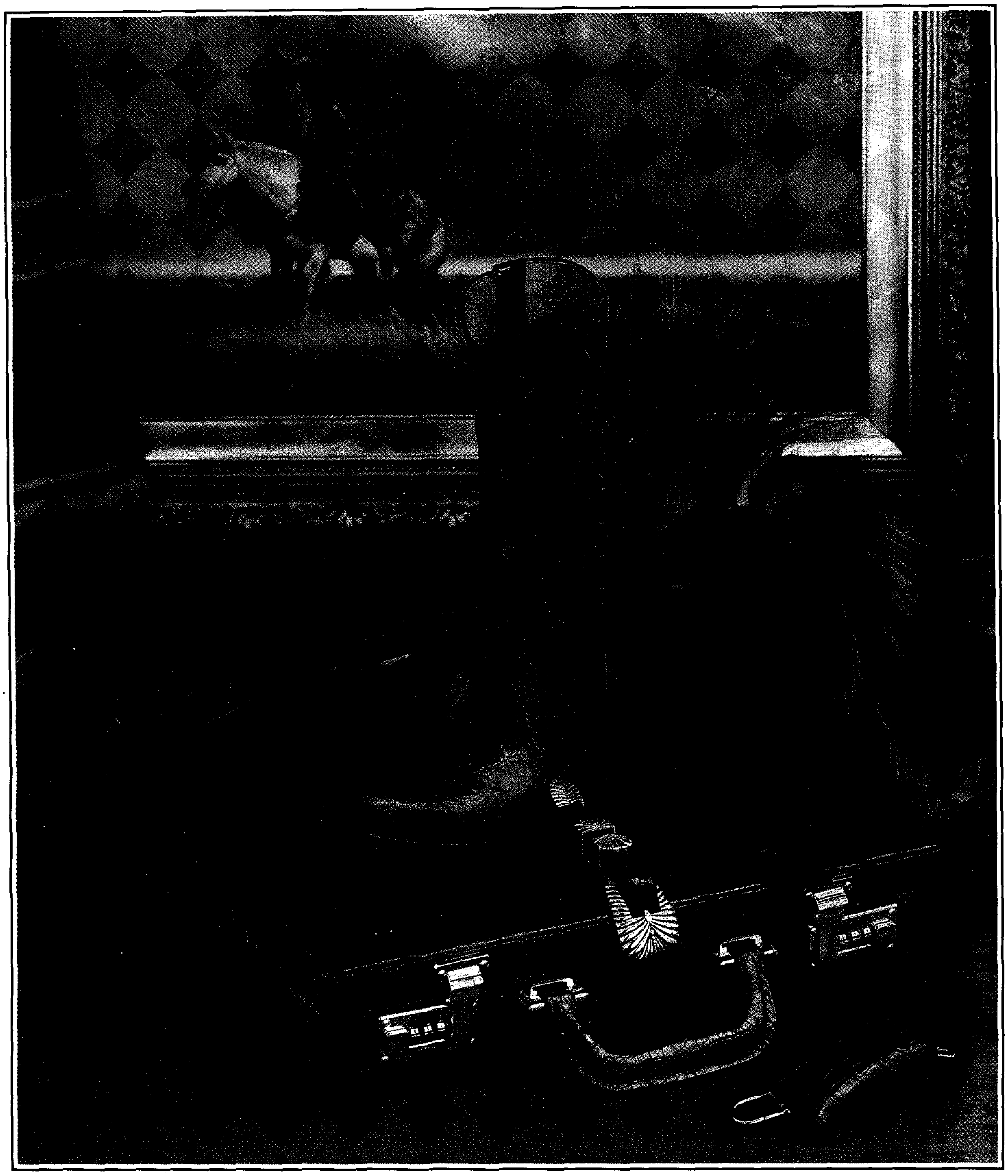

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of his feelings for her.
He knew where to go although
he felt slightly less confident
about what to get. He found the
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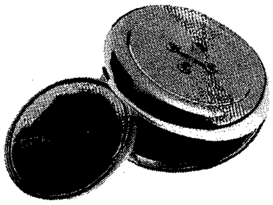

[ESTĒE LAUDER EXCLUSIVE COMPACT]

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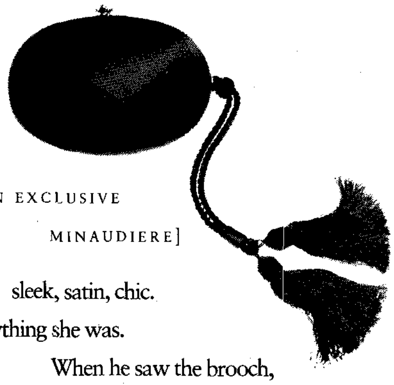

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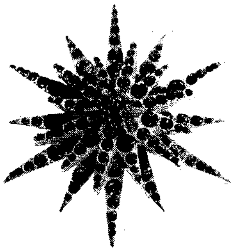

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THE NEW YORKER

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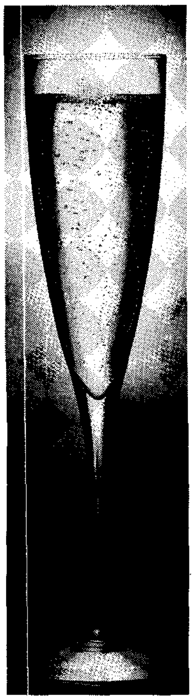

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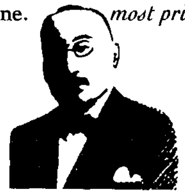

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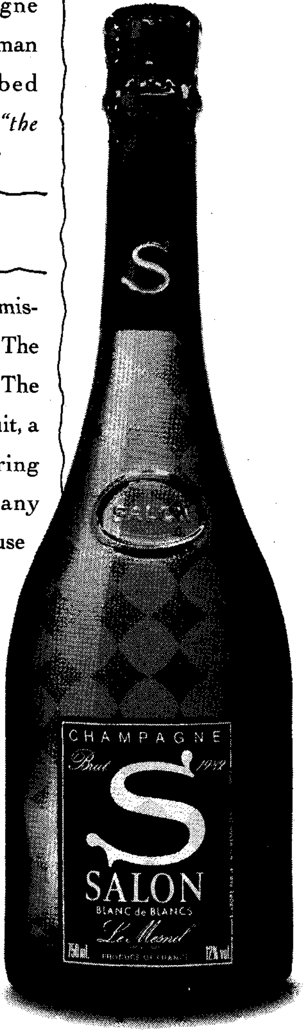

Salon Le Mesnil

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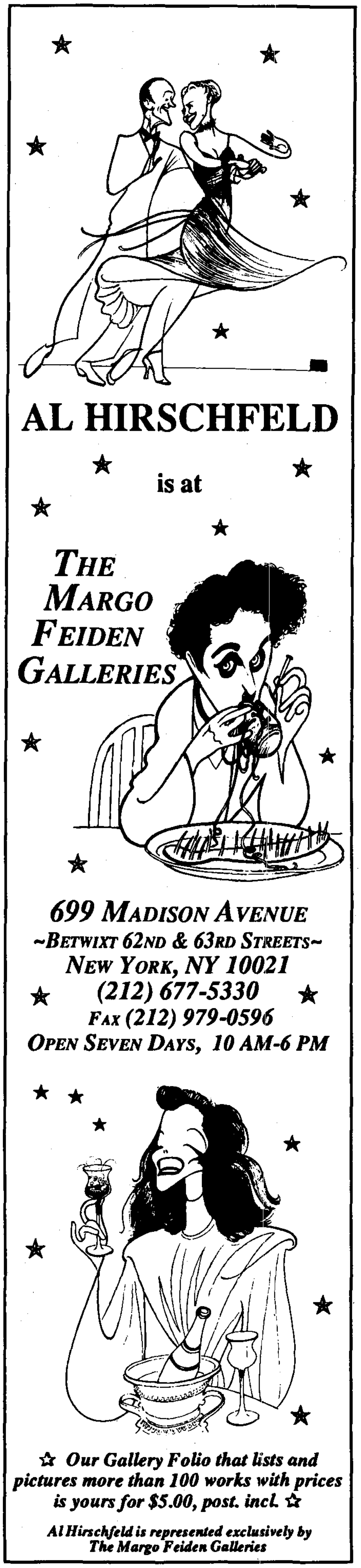

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COMMENT

WILLIAM SHAWN

William Shawn guided this magazine for half a hundred years, from its youth to its maturity. He died last week, on the morning of Tuesday, December 8th, in the apartment, at Fifth Avenue and Ninety-sixth Street, where he and his wife, Cecille, had lived since 1950, and where they reared their sons, Wallace and Allen, and their daughter, Mary. He was eighty-five years old. Though his health had been frail in recent months, his soft voice grown softer than ever, he was fully present, intellectually and spiritually, until the last. He died unexpectedly, with appointments on his calendar and half-read books and manuscripts on his night table; and he died peacefully, spared the well-intentioned medical ministrations that too often mar the end of a long life.

Mr. Shawn—the honorific seemed a part of his name, and he himself planted a "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss" in front of the surname of almost everyone he addressed—was the editor of *The New Yorker* from January 21, 1952, until February 13, 1987. Thirty-five years is a very long time to be the boss of anything—especially in the unforgiving and often unstable world of weekly magazine journalism. But that great pile of years only hints at the size of his accomplishment. His sensibility, his intellect, his moral seriousness, and his taste began to shape the magazine from the moment he joined it, in 1933, eight years into its life, and they continue to influence it to this day. They will go on doing so for as long as it is published. William Shawn was as surely a creator of *The New Yorker* as was Harold Ross. However the magazine develops in the future, it is simply impossible to imagine it without the mark of his vision.

Mr. Shawn disliked hyperbole. He preferred fact, checkable fact. And it is fact, checkable fact, that he was small, bald, big-eared, round-shouldered, fragile-looking, tremulously soft-spoken, almost comically polite, and given to minor but

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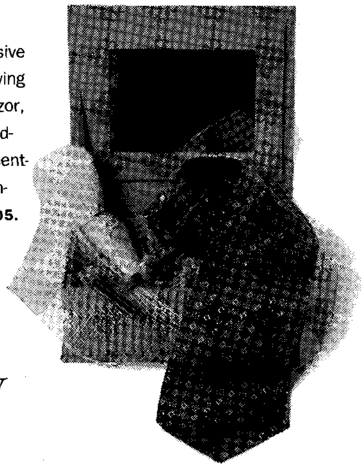

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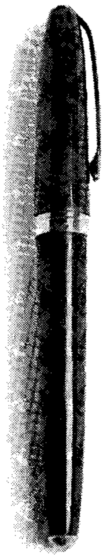

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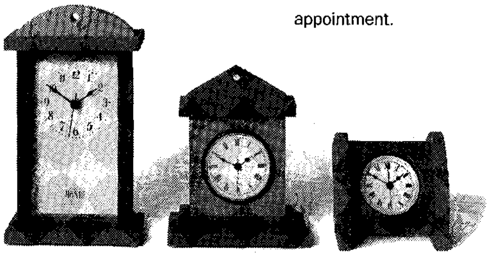

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vivid phobias (no automatic elevators, no air-conditioning, no airplane rides, no driving over bridges). It is also fact, checkable fact, that he became, while scarcely ever writing a word over his own name, one of the commanding figures of twentieth-century American letters. No editor ever ruled a large and complex magazine as absolutely as he ruled this one; yet no editor, perhaps, ever imparted to so many writers and artists as powerful a sense of freedom and possibility. He was adept equally in fiction and in nonfiction, a rare quality in an editor, and both fields yielded new strains as a result of his cross-pollination. Short stories gained greater verisimilitude as a result of his passion for factual accuracy; reporting was imbued with the narrative drive, the drama, and the character portraiture of good fiction. He brought to the process of editing a profound and solemn respect for writing, and an insatiable, almost childlike, and occasionally gleeful curiosity about nearly everything. He did not succeed with every writer or every piece, of course; there were some writers to whose talents he was blind, others whose faults he indulged, and still others whose talents were cruelly stunted by his regime of infinite patience. But there were more—many more—who, nourished by his kindness and his sometimes spooky intuition, flourished spectacularly. His power to bring out the best in those who wrote and edited for him seemed occult, or would have if it had not become so routine. But the magnetic field of his influence and his example extended far beyond *The New Yorker*, aligning the particles of American journalism and American literature in general. To the degree that writing and reporting in this country are more incisive, more thoughtful, and more accurate now than they were a half century ago, the change is in no small part attributable to the work he did and the work he summoned forth.

Mr. Shawn was born on August 31, 1907, in Chicago. After two years at the University of Michigan, he dropped out and knocked around—to New Mexico, back to Chicago, to Paris for a couple of years, and, finally, to Manhattan, where he got his foot in *The New Yorker*'s door by contributing items to the Talk of the Town. In 1935, he was made an editor of the magazine, and, in 1939, its managing editor. His impact became fully evident during the Second World War: under his supervision, *The New Yorker* covered the war with a new depth and seriousness, focussing especially on the experience of ordinary soldiers. Thousands of G.I.s who read the magazine in the pocket-sized, no-advertising "pony" edition that was circulated free to the troops became its most loyal subscribers after the war, the foundation of its growth and prosperity. As Ross came increasingly to rely on Mr. Shawn's judgment, *The New Yorker* became steadily more intellectually challenging, more politically engaged, and more journalistically audacious. When Ross died, his chosen successor was also his natural and proper one.

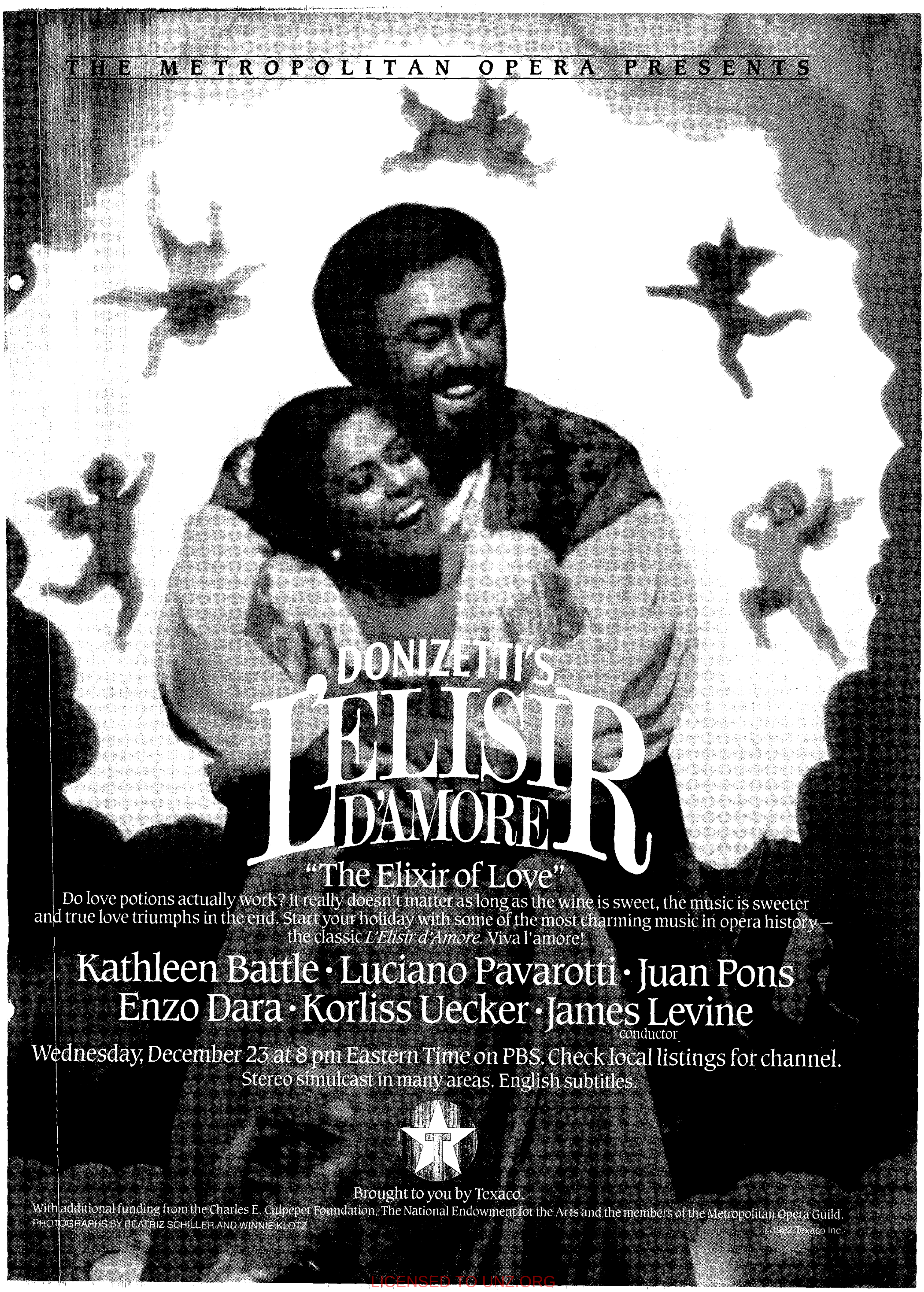
The decades of Mr. Shawn's ascendancy are often described in terms of high points: the journalism of writers like A. J. Liebling, John Hersey, Rachel Carson, Truman Capote, Lillian Ross, Richard Rovere, Joseph Mitchell, and John McPhee; the fiction of storytellers like J. D. Salinger, Irwin Shaw, John Cheever, Isaac Bashevis Singer, S. J. Perelman, Donald Barthelme, and John Updike; the reviews of critics like Pauline Kael, Harold Rosenberg, Edmund Wilson, Andrew Porter, and Arlene Croce; the reflections of essayists like James Baldwin, Dwight Macdonald, Hannah Arendt, and Jonathan Schell. But there were thousands of articles and stories in between, many of comparably high quality, few falling short of a certain standard of excellence. Behind those thousands of pieces of writing were hundreds of relationships—the relationships he built, painstakingly and one by one, with hundreds of reporters, critics, fiction writers, poets, and artists who wrote and drew for this magazine.

His formal, courtly manner—decades could pass before he might shyly propose the experiment of going on a first-name basis with a veteran editor or contributor—was a sign of his seriousness about the shared enterprise of creating the magazine. His formality served not so much to diminish the intimacy between him and his visitor as to increase it between them both and the task at hand. His code was one of honor and precision; without the distractions of bonhomie, the work of writing and editing and rewriting gave a higher pleasure. His dark suits seemed monastic, but those who knew him understood that they did not represent a retreat from life; they were battle dress for a lifetime enlistment in the pursuit of written clarity—the grail to be wrested away from clinging preconception, flawed thinking, and sickly syntax, and set free, shining, on the page.

He could be relaxed and off guard, particularly in the company of someone funny—a joke or an unexpected shift would make his face tremble and redden with laughter—but an expression of preoccupation would quickly take over again. Bowing and backing awkwardly away, he would return to his office, where work was always mountainously at hand. He was an athlete of a reader, as swift and sure in a twenty-four-thousand-word marathon as in a three-stanza verse-sprint. He read every piece of writing in every issue of the magazine at least three times: first when it was submitted, again when it had gone into galleys, and, finally, in page proof—often with pauses for pencilled queries or reëditings, or for conferences over some passage, extending down to the last essential adjective or deletion.

Mr. Shawn had few preconceptions when it came to reading, and was always hoping to be surprised or instructed—to find something out of the ordinary. In particular, he had a great ear for new writing. He knew when some young stranger was saying things that one had never quite heard before. Sometimes he would carry such a manuscript back to the submitting editor's office by hand. "I think this one may turn out to be a writer," he would murmur, shaking his head and smiling a little at what might lie ahead now for this new byline, and for the magazine.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Next week's edition of *The New Yorker*, dated December 28th / January 4th, will be a double issue. It will include a special section about William Shawn. ♦



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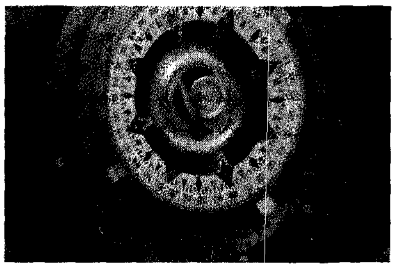

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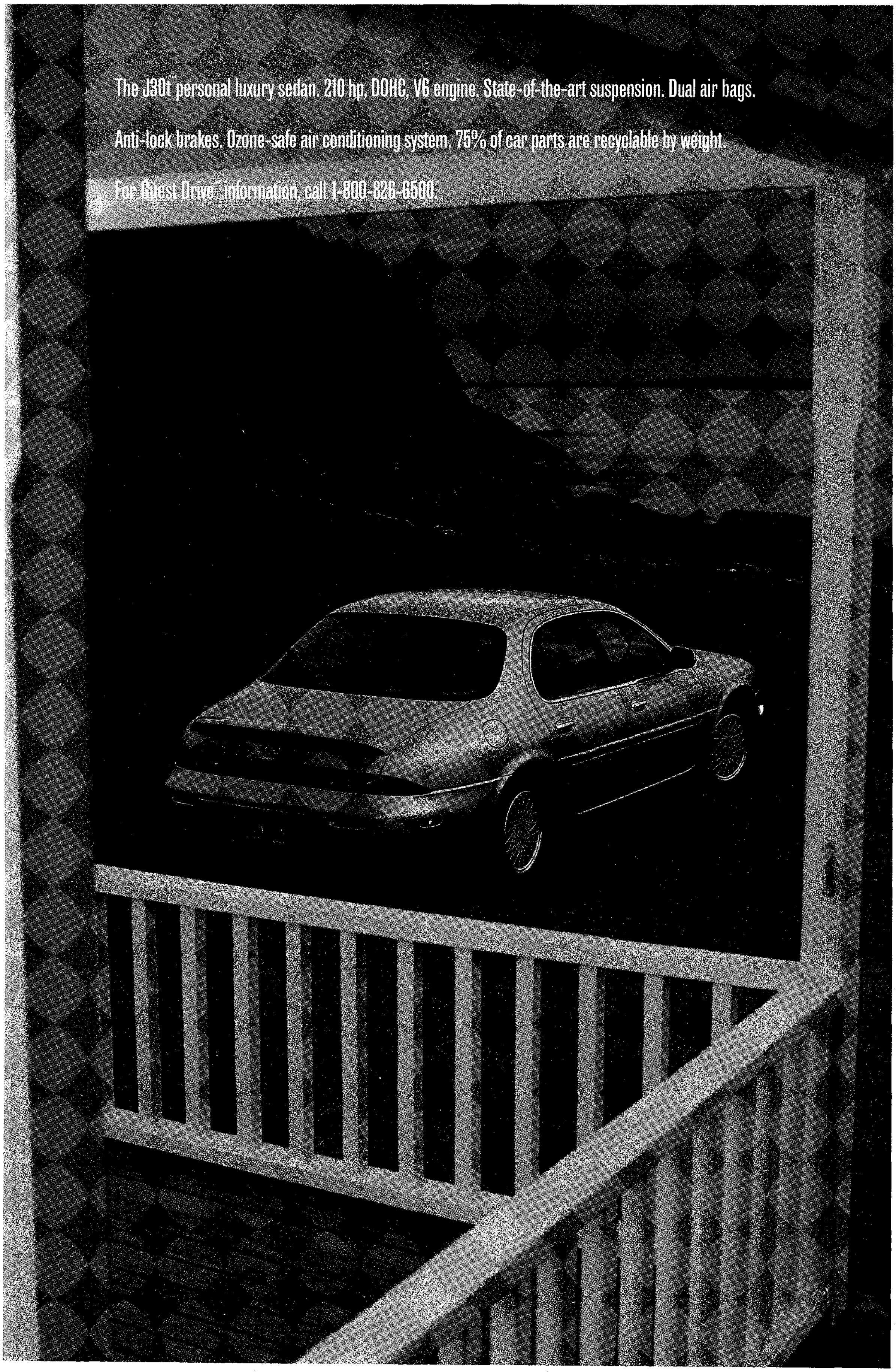

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Live and Let Live

"THE MYSTERIES AND WHAT'S SO FUNNY?" is that rarity, a work of performance art that happens to be a work of art as well. In 1991, the year of its première, the dance world gave it a Bessie, and, in 1992, the theatre world followed up with an Obie. Any time you find dancers and theatre types facing off, you are sure to find David Gordon in the middle of the rumpus; and, despite his heavyweight collaborators here (music by Philip Glass, sets and costumes by Red Grooms), "The Mysteries" is unquestionably Mr. Gordon's baby. It features his script, his staging, his dancelike movement, his casting—in short, his sensibility at every point.

The play—Mr. Gordon's designation—tells two stories simultaneously: that of the artist Marcel Duchamp as a thriving octogenarian, and that of a fifty-year marriage between a couple named Sam and Rose, both in physical and psychic decline. Duchamp has enjoyed what he considers a lifetime of luck and he speaks with Olympian serenity. Sam and Rose have experienced both joy and sorrow; emotion alternately warms and singes their voices. The mysterious wedding of these two vastly discrepant stories constitutes the triumph of the work (through January 3 at the Joyce). "It seems to me that either life can knock you down, or you can stand slightly aside and say, 'This is really painful, this is really funny, this is really ironic,' " Mr. Gordon says.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

A Christmas Carol—Patrick Stewart returns to Broadway with his one-man staging of the Dickens classic. Preview on Dec. 16. Opens Dec. 17 at 6:45 and runs through Jan. 3. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

A . . . My Name Is *Still* Alice—A sequel to the 1984 musical revue "A . . . My Name Is Alice." Conceived and directed by Joan Micklin Silver and Julianne Boyd. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Conversations with My Father—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try Herb Gardner's bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. The cast is led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch; Daniel Sullivan directed. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/13/92.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Destiny of Me—A new play by Larry Kramer. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Falsettos—This back-to-back revival of "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland," two of William Finn's three one-act musicals about a childish, self-absorbed man who leaves his wife and son for his not very nice male lover, is strictly for those who care. (5/11/92) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

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Five Guys Named Moe—The guys are black dancers and singers of ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan. This London import makes a merry evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Guys and Dolls—A lively production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Faith Prince, Josie de Guzman, Adam Arkin, and Tom Wopat are the leading dolls and guys, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gypsy Passion—Eighteen Spanish dancers, singers, and musicians in a flamenco revue. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh—A musical based on the song parodies of Allan Sherman. It was conceived and written by Douglas Bernstein and Rob Krausz. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Jelly's Last Jam—The music of Jelly Roll Morton, self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, and, at the same time, an unsparing delineation of Morton himself. The show, an original if there ever was one, was written and directed by George C. Wolfe. In the starring role, Gregory Hines combines his astonishing talents as tap dancer and actor; Savion Glover, who plays the character as a young man, is worthy of him, which is saying a lot. (5/11/92) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Joined at the Head—Ellen Parker gives a lovely performance in this rather touching play about a successful novelist on tour in Boston who meets and becomes friends again with her high-school boyfriend and his dying wife. Kevin O'Rourke is the boyfriend and Catherine Butterfield, who wrote the play, is the wife. Pamela Berlin was the director. (12/7/92) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Dec. 20.)

My Favorite Year—A new musical, based on the movie of the same name, by Joseph Dougherty, Stephen Flaherty, and Lynn Ahrens. Evan Pappas, Tim Curry, and Lainie Kazan have the leads. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Mysteries and What's So Funny?—David Gordon's work about life and art, with music by Philip Glass and sets by Red Grooms. Performed by Mr. Gordon's Pick Up Company. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Closes Jan. 3.)

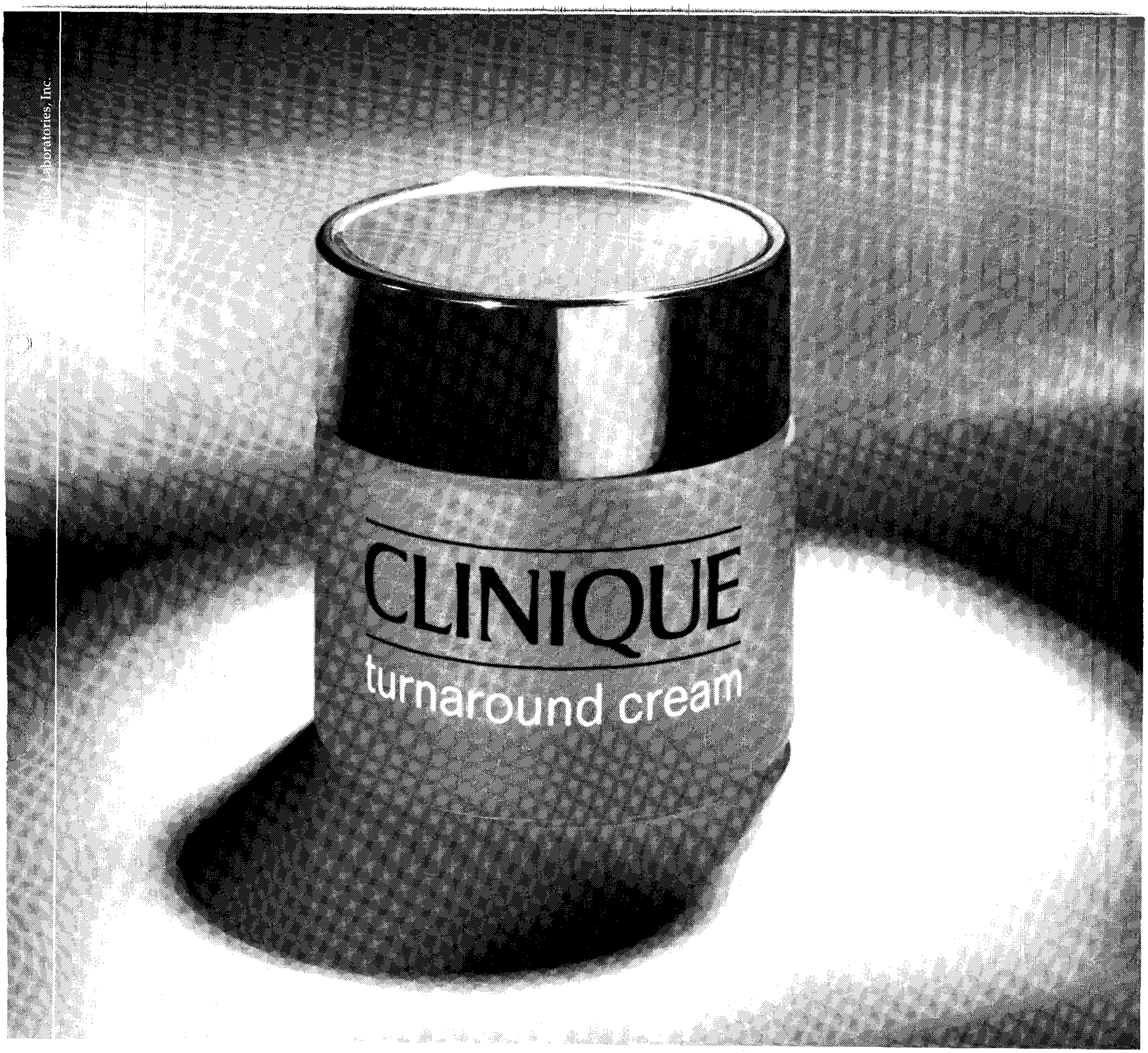
The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me—A series of vignettes, by the rising writer/performer David Drake, about gay life in the age of AIDS. Mr. Drake is more gifted as a performer than as a writer, but his show is frequently absorbing—by turns silly and poignant. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 564-8038.)

Noël and Gertie—The York Theatre Company presents a show about Noël Coward and Gertrude Lawrence, devised by British drama critic Sheridan Morley. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Closes Dec. 20. For information about tickets, call 534-5366.)

Oleanna—David Mamet, in fine, curmudgeonly form, takes on political correctness, sexual harassment, and a number of other isms in this brief, powerful drama that continues to stir up the ideologues. Rebecca Pidgeon and William H. Macy lend articulate support to a play whose skepticism is as evenhanded as it is corrosive. Not to be missed. (11/16/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100.)

Orpheus in Love—A comic opera-theatre piece with words by Craig Lucas and music by Gerald Busby. (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

The Seagull—Chekhov's play launches the second season of the National Actors Theatre. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6280.)



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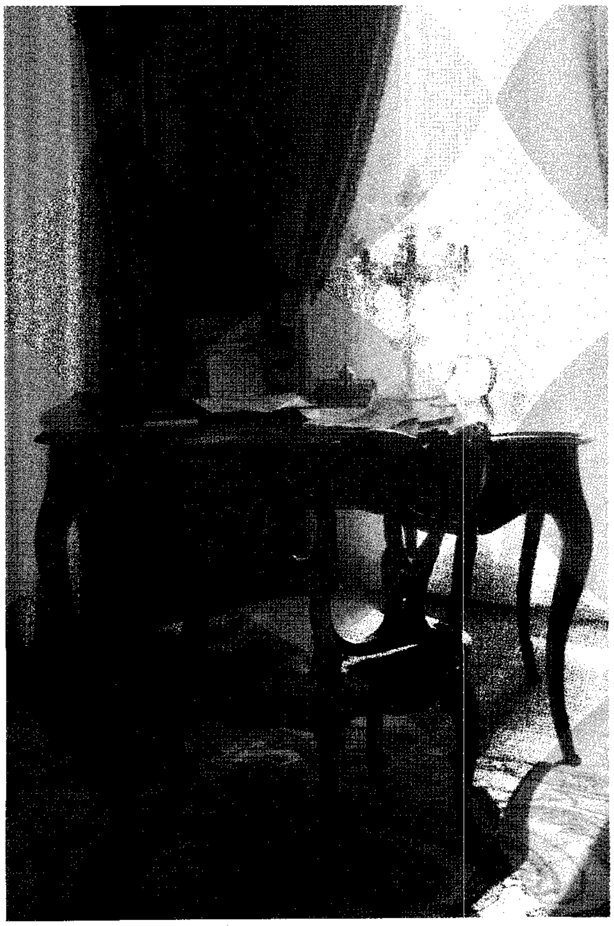

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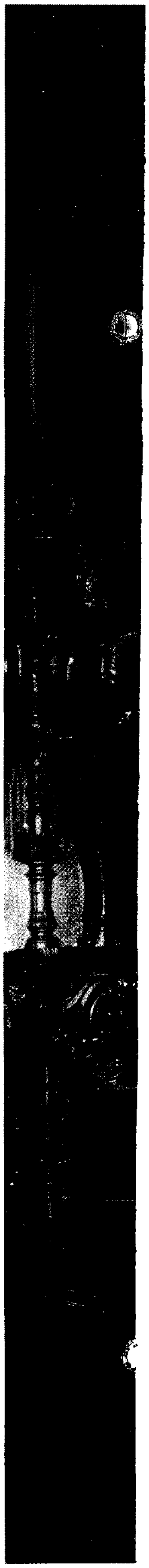

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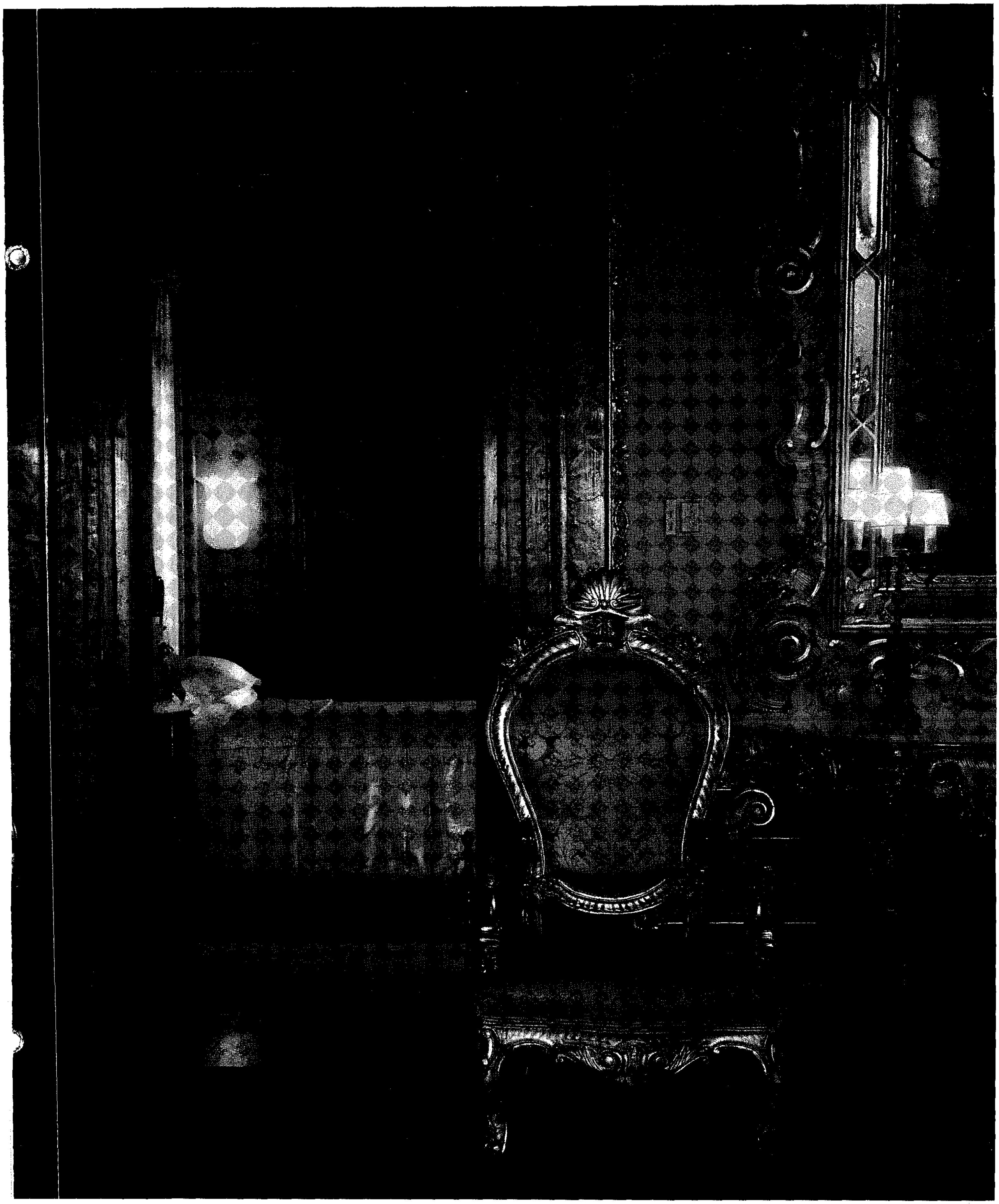

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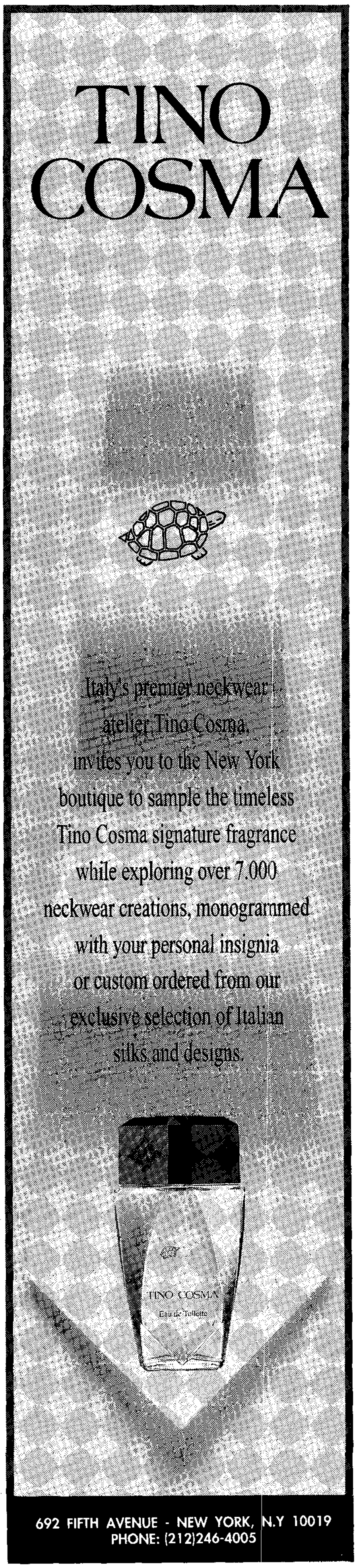
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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

The Sheik of Avenue B—A Jewish ragtime and jazz-era music-and-comedy revue conceived and written by Isaiah Sheffer. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Closes Jan. 3.)

The Sisters Rosensweig—Wendy Wasserstein's new play, a comedy with serious undertones, is about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters—an international banker, a travel writer, and a wife and mother who's a professional dispenser of advice. They are portrayed by Jane Alexander, Frances McDormand, and Madeline Kahn, each of whom proves worthy (and then some) of her role. The spirit of Chekhov hovers but never intrudes. Laughter is continuous. (11/2/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Someone Who'll Watch Over Me—Alec McCowen (English), Stephen Rea (Irish), and James McDaniel (American) give stunning performances as hostages in Beirut in Frank McGuinness's moving and humorous play. Robin Lefèvre directed. (12/7/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Spic-O-Rama—Six well-written characters who have found not only their author but also their performer in John Leguizamo's scintillating and scathing one-man show about Latino life in the Big City. Leguizamo is vivacious, inventive, and very, very funny. The show is original and scenically ingenious. (11/9/92) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

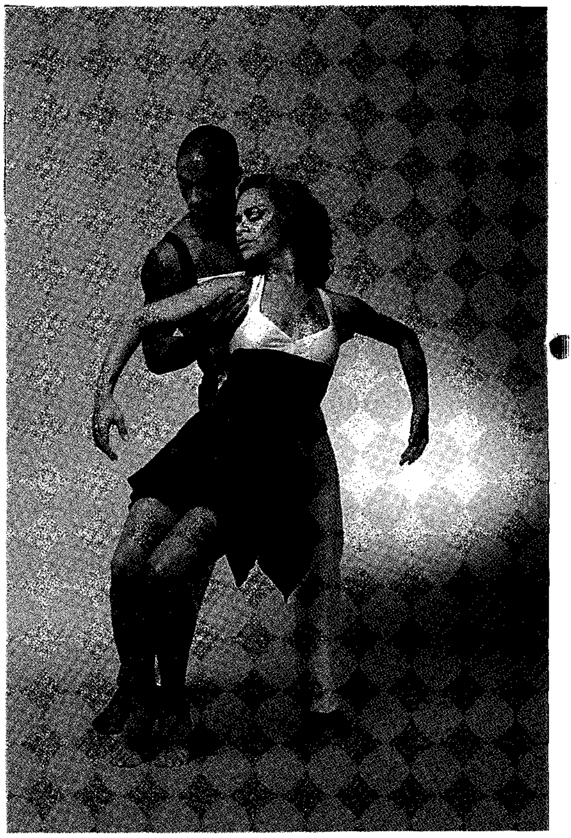
Times Square Angel—Charles Busch's "hard-boiled Christmas fantasy." (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes Dec. 20.)

Wilder, Wilder, Wilder—Three by Thornton—The Willow Cabin Theatre Company presents Thornton Wilder's "The Long Christmas Dinner," "The Happy Journey," and "Pullman Car Hiawatha." (Reviewed in this issue.) (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. Closes Dec. 28. For reservations, call 886-1889.)

Woyzeck—Jesse Borrego has the title role in a production of Georg Büchner's play, directed by JoAnne Akalaitis. With music by Philip Glass and a translation by Henry J. Schmidt. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Dec. 27.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATSKILLS ON BROADWAY:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 3.). . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** The show's holiday edition, "Forbidden Christmas," runs through Dec. 27. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. (Closes Jan. 3.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 3.). . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.


At City Center, the Alvin Ailey company's Desmond Richardson and Danielle Gee

©JACK MITCHELL

DANCE

Alvin and the Duke

In 1970, American Ballet Theatre brought in Alvin Ailey to make a work to a score commissioned from Duke Ellington. The result was "The River," a suite whose eleven sections were named for aspects of water ("Giggling Rapids," "Meander"). A.B.T. has not performed the ballet for some years; however, the Dance Theatre of Harlem is scheduled to give it a company première this coming March. And you can see it danced by Ailey's own company at City Center this month.

The Ellington music, alas, will be on tape, but the dancers will be very live, their reflexes attuned to Ailey's intentions as well as to his steps. At least, that's what Masazumi Chaya is hoping for. Mr. Chaya, who is currently the Ailey company's associate director, has himself performed several roles in "The River," and he is overseeing this revival. "All the steps are there," he said recently. "But I think Alvin wanted us to spice it up. We don't use point shoes, so the steps have to be done down lower and up higher. I ask the dancers for the same focus: Why are we doing this? What is going on in the music?" He paused, then added, "Well, ninety-eight per cent of the movement is the same. The other two per cent is the spice."

New York City Ballet—Presenting "The Nutcracker," through Jan. 3. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 16 and Dec. 21-22 at 6; Dec. 18 at 8; Dec. 19 at 2 and 8; and Dec. 20 at 1 and 5. The season continues through Feb. 21.)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—In an engagement that will run through Jan. 3. Dec. 16 at 8: "Memoria," "Shelter" (company première), and "The Winter in Lisbon."... ¶ Dec. 17 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Pas de Duke," "A Folk Dance," and "The Stack-Up."... ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: "Memoria," "Night Creature," "The Lark Ascending," "Opus McShann," "For 'Bird'—with Love," "A Song for You," "Blues Suite," "Cry," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 19 at 2: "Escargot," "Pas de Duke," "Fontessa and Friends," and "Memoria."... ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: "Dance at the Gym," "Shelter," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 20 at 3: "Fontessa and Friends," "Shelter," and "District Storyville."... ¶ Dec. 20 at 7:30: "Escargot," "Cry," "Masekela Langage," and "Revelations."... ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: "Streams," "Treading," "Frames" (première), and "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Bebe Miller Company—In "The Hendrix Project" and a work in progress titled "In Mnemosyne's House, Again and Again." Presented by Danspace Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. For reservations, call 674-8194. Dec. 17 and Dec. 19-21 at 8:30.)

Stephanie Skura & Company—In "After She Squawks." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St 477-5288. Dec. 17-20 at 9.)

Nadine Helstroffer—With seven other dancers, in the première of "Migration." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. For reservations, call 982-8673. Dec. 17-18 at 9 and Dec. 19 at 8.)

"Ted Levy & Friends"—An evening of tap, music, and song, with Mr. Levy, Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, Jimmy Slyde, Carrie Smith, and others. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For tickets, call 307-7171. Dec. 21 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Family Reunion

ALTHOUGH the Brecker Brothers haven't really gone anywhere, there's no denying that they're back. In the late seventies, saxophonist Michael Brecker and trumpeter Randy Brecker were on the front lines of fusion, their music scaling both the pop and R. & B. charts. In 1982, Randy made the first in a pair of bebop records; Michael would go on to win a Grammy for a solo record of his own. Then, just as the pair was finally getting around to a reunion, Michael took up with Paul Simon, and he spent last year globe-trotting with the Rhythm of the Saints tour.

Finally, though, the jazz world can stop holding its breath for another Brecker Brothers record: the newly released "Return of the Brecker Brothers" is sitting pretty in the contemporary-jazz Top Ten. What's more, the brothers will be at the Blue Note through December 20. "Return of the Brecker Brothers," which is informed by Michael's recent do-si-do with African music, is a spirited exercise in genre-hopping. It goes a long way toward explaining what the Brecker Brothers have been up to for the past decade or so. "The idea was to take a short break," Randy Brecker says. "But I guess we've been busy."

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town.... ¶ Call the phone number listed for performance schedules and, since musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change, to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**andrea marcovicci** is presently at work in the Oak Room. She'll be performing a show called, "I'll Be Seeing You," featuring love songs from the Second World War, through Dec. 19. On Dec. 22, she begins "Home for the Holidays." The late show on Fridays and Saturdays is "Just Kern." Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and John Parker, Fridays to the George Stubbs trio and the Freddy Francis trio (who is also there on Saturdays with Mabel Godwin), and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

A-Train, 318 W. 45th St. (974-0500)—A flashy but comfortable new jazz club that features African/Caribbean food, a Bessie Smith mural, and waitresses in tight black cocktail dresses. During the early evening, small combos play in the bar area; the main events take place on a stage decorated with a bas-relief of the Manhattan skyline.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A cool green music hall that features a steady stream of international pop and cabaret stars. It's also a tapas restaurant—if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **melba moore** is here through the end of December, performing her show "Songs My Mother Taught Me." The early shows on the weekend are given over to **blossom dearie**.

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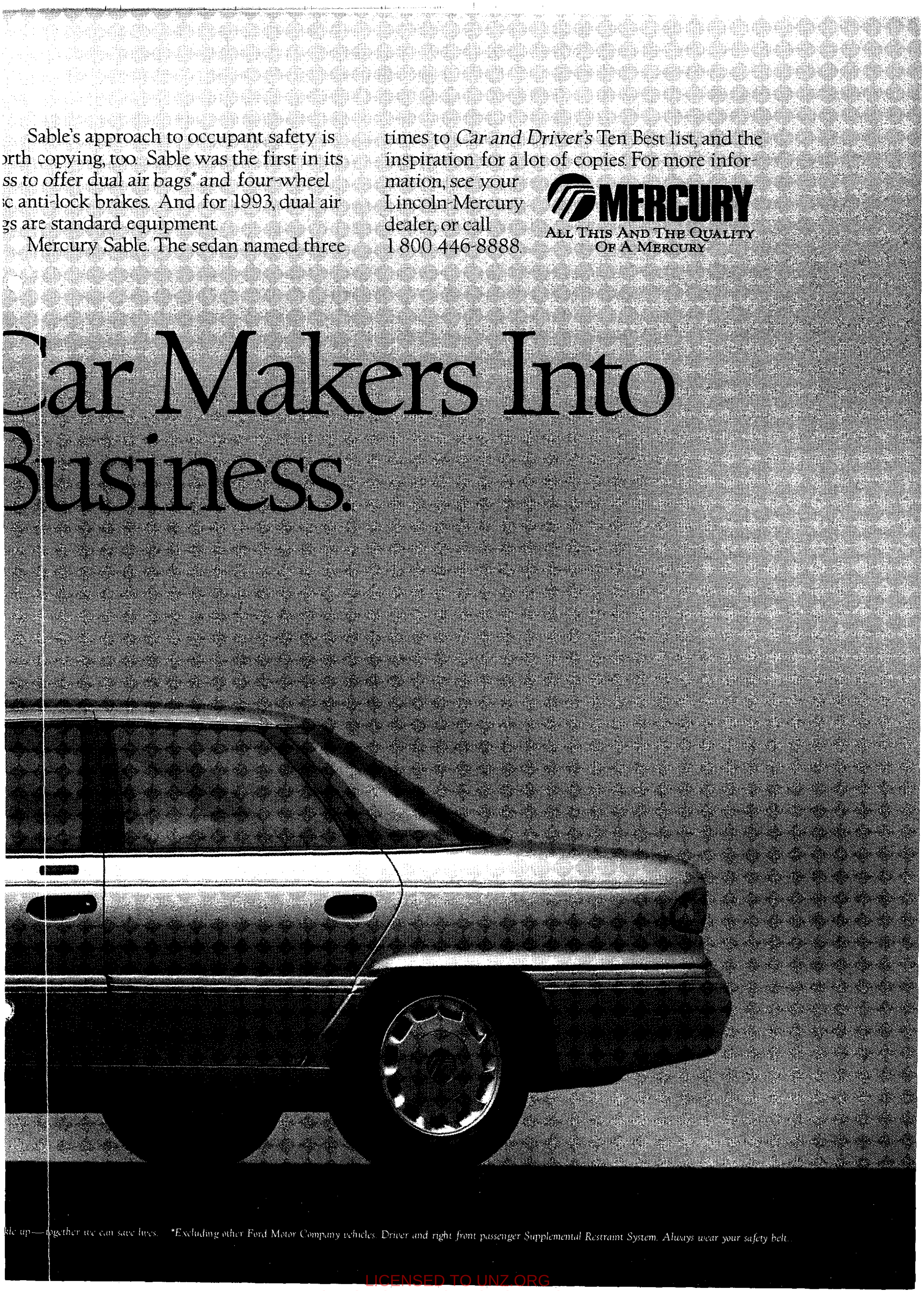

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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Impressionistic "in concert" portraits of musicians who have played here round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. Pianist **JOHN HICKS** leads a trio on Dec. 18-19. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Brand-name jazz a specialty. The recently reunited **BRECKER BROTHERS** are here through Dec. 20; **ADAM HOLZMAN AND MONA LISA OVERDRIVE** come in on Dec. 21; and **MONTY ALEXANDER** mounts a Nat King Cole tribute as of Dec. 22. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, airy folk-and-rock club that offers burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster. On Dec. 18-19, the **ROCHES** take the stage with their annual Christmas show. Maggie, Terre, and Suzzy Roche can always be counted on for frank and funny folk music. Not long ago, they made a record called "We Three Kings," which found them carolling. Some of their renditions were lovely and straight-faced and some of them were a little off the wall. Dec. 20 belongs to **MERYN CADELL,** among others. Cadell is part singer, part performance artist. Her songs, which are basically monologues set to music, can be bizarre, intimate, hilarious, or all of the above.

The Brecker Brothers at the Blue Note

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Through Dec. 19, **SONNY FORTUNE, KENNY BARRON,** and **DAVID WILLIAMS** are in swing. **KIRK LIGHTSEY, EDDIE HENDERSON,** and **CECIL MC BEE** begin work on Dec. 21. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to the genial pianist and singer **BOBBY SHORT** . . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **RONNY WHYTE** presides at the piano. **BARBARA CARROLL** is scheduled to return on Dec. 22.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club. New and used bands of every stripe pass through nightly. **EUGENIUS,** which performs here on Dec. 18, is a Glasgow band that used to be called Captain America, before Marvel Comics got wind of them. They play grunge-pop in the vein of fellow-Glaswegians Teenage Fanclub and the Jesus and Mary Chain—that is, a turbulent sound whipped into shape by some smart hooks. Their fine new album, "Oomalama," has helped them shoot up the alternative ranks. Sharing the bill with Eugenius will be **BRENDA KAHN** (see Maxwell's).

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A long, narrow basement restaurant, where early arrivals grab the private tables and latecomers have to sit mess-hall style. The bar area can get a bit rowdy, but the dining room, with its coves and candlelight and quilted wall hangings, is a fine spot for jazz. **TIMOTHEA AND THE PO' BOYS** are here Dec. 18-19.

Continental Club, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.—This two-floor venue has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off-Off Broadway theatre. Physically, the place is sagging a bit, but it has an odd, dingy charm. **WEEN,** which performs here on Dec. 17, has just released "Pure Guava." The album was recorded at the home of two men who call themselves Dean and Gene Ween, and much of it is pure hole-in-the-head weirdness. In a world in which many bands give us everything but the kitchen sink, Ween gives us only the kitchen sink. A typical song will include two distorted guitars and a fairly lame drum track, on top of which Dean and Gene will rant and rave and joke around—occasionally bursting into laughter, or ending a song with the words "I think it's over." It doesn't exactly sound like a winning formula, but much of "Pure Guava" is inspired. For concert information, call 249-8870. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday night. **GEORGE GEE** and his orchestra perform on Dec. 20. Mr. Gee, a short, stocky, ebullient leader, doesn't play an instrument with the group but, rather, acts as conductor, announcer, and cheerleader, punching the air at opportune moments. The band, which includes an impressive array of musicians, plays mostly swing tunes. Mr. Gee puts his horn section to various and effective use, which really pays off on the band's several Count Basie numbers. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—A softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. **SCOTT HAMILTON** holds forth through Dec. 20; **KIM & MARION** claim the week beginning Dec. 22. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Dining.

J's, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—Upstairs and unpretentious, with a new cast of characters every night. You might think them an odd combination, but tuba player **SAM PILAFIAN** and Django-style guitarist **FRANK VIGNOLA,** who'll head up a quartet here on Dec. 21, can be relied on to swap some pretty mean riffs on old-time pop classics. Pilafian has a parallel "legit" career at the bottom of the Empire Brass Quintet; in fact, if you hang around till the wee hours, you may catch some of his buddies dropping by for a late jam after a long evening in the orchestra pit. Also this week: Randa[illegible] McNamara's quartet (Dec. 18), Judy Barnett's sextet (Dec. 19), Virg Dzurinko's trio (Dec. 20), and the guitarists **BUCKY PIZZARELLI** and **HOWARD ALDEN** (Dec. 22). Dining.

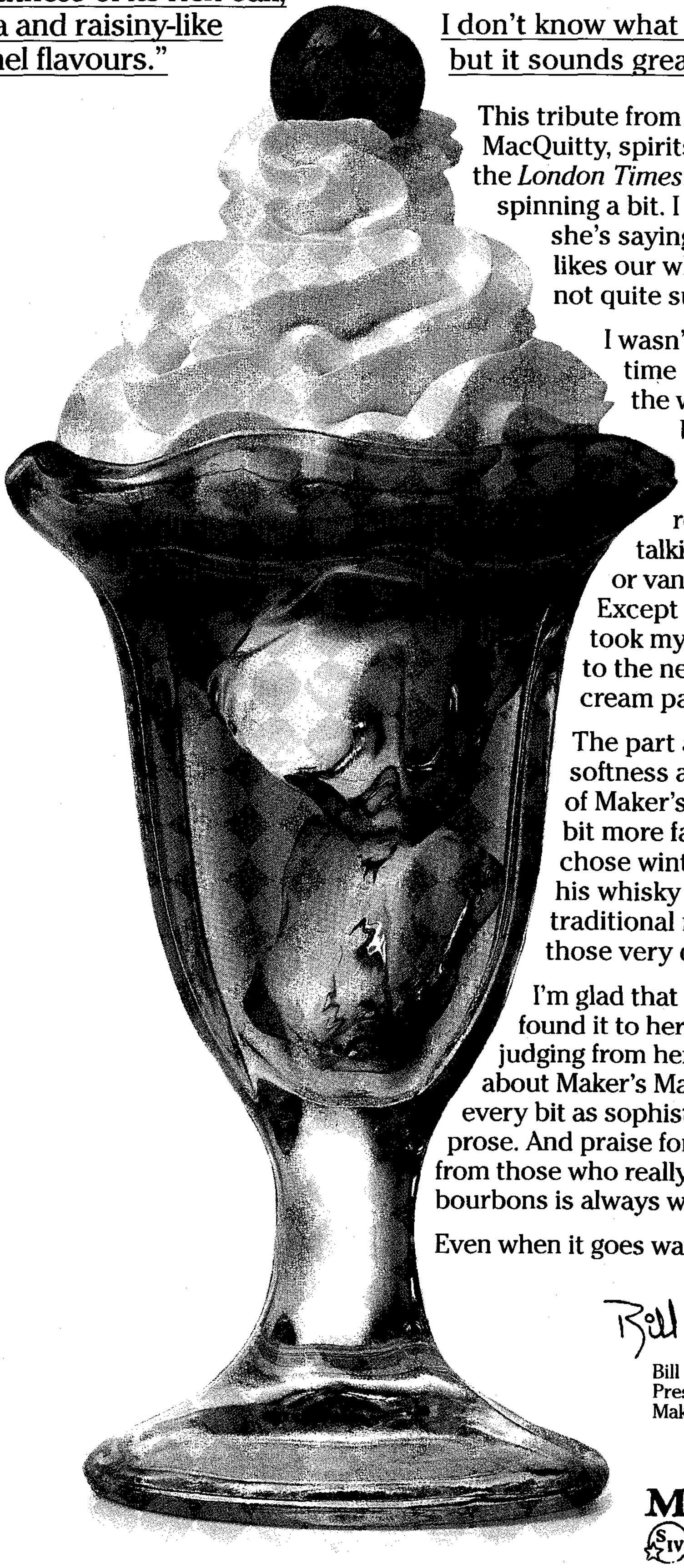
Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—The club most likely to feature an electric-rake player. **JOHN ZORN** is here on Dec. 16; **PAUL MOTIAN, BILL FRISELL,** and **JOE LOVANO** come in Dec. 17-19; and Dec. 20 belongs to the New York Composer's Orchestra, which includes **WAYNE HORVITZ, ROBIN HOLCOMB,** and **BOBBY PREVITE,** among others. Holcomb returns for a solo show on Dec. 22.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The people who play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The fine up-and-coming folkie **KATE JACOBS** appears on Dec. 18. And, on Dec. 19, **CHRIS WHITLEY** shares a bill with **BRENDA KAHN,** who is not like other people. Kahn's latest record is an endearing batch of off-kilter folk called "Epiphany in Brooklyn." It's a blissfully low-budget affair, laced with ragged acoustic guitars and out-there vignettes about living and loving in the neurosis capital of the world. Kahn draws on a variety of influences. She can rant like a punker; she can warble like a New Waver; and she can also sing. There's always a surprise around the next corner: "She's in Love," for instance, sounds like Dylan via Springsteen.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—As you clean your plate beneath the gaze of Henry VIII, you might imagine yourself in England. But when the lights go down, you're in long-ago New Orleans, where Jelly Roll Morton struts his stuff. **VERNEL BAGNERIS** (a New Orleans native himself) portrays the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz with elegance, verve, and compassion, providing an intimate counterbalance to the psychologically tortured depiction currently being purveyed on Broadway. Bagneris bases his script on interviews that Jelly Roll taped in the thirties, and intersperses virtuosic renditions of sixteen numbers—all packed into little more than an hour. Butch Thompson complements him capably at the keyboard through Dec. 16, after which pianist Morten Gunnar Larsen returns.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot.* A Jule Styne revue is currently under way. The show, the fifth in this cabaret's well-received series of composer tributes, features **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY, GREGG EDELMAN, DAVID GARRISON, JAY LEONHART,** and **KAY MC CLELLAND,** among others. Styne, who turns eighty-seven on New Year's Eve, has an imposing list of stage and screen successes, including "Gypsy," "Funny Girl," "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," and on and on. He's still at it, too: besides having a new musical in the works, he served as creative consultant for this event. Dining. Closed Mondays.

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—A massive rock club, where the orchestra has been gutted for maximum standing capacity. **JOHNNY CASH** performs on Dec. 16, with the **CARTER FAMILY.** Cash, a product of the fifties, has enjoyed remarkable longevity. Since sign-



The London Times said of Maker's Mark, "What separates this bourbon from the rest is the softness and smoothness of its rich oak, vanilla and raisiny-like caramel flavours."

I don't know what that means, but it sounds great.

This tribute from Jane MacQuitty, spirits writer for the *London Times*, has my head spinning a bit. I think what she's saying is that she likes our whisky, but I'm not quite sure.

I wasn't there at the time my Dad created the whisky that became Maker's Mark, but I can't ever remember him talking about raisins or vanilla or caramel. Except maybe when he took my sister and me to the neighborhood ice cream parlor.

The part about the softness and smoothness of Maker's Mark sounds a bit more familiar. Dad chose winter wheat for his whisky instead of the traditional rye to give it those very qualities.

I'm glad that Ms. MacQuitty found it to her liking, because judging from her comments about Maker's Mark, her palate is every bit as sophisticated as her prose. And praise for our whisky from those who really appreciate fine bourbons is always welcome.

Even when it goes way over my head.

Bill Samuels, Jr.

Bill Samuels, Jr.
President
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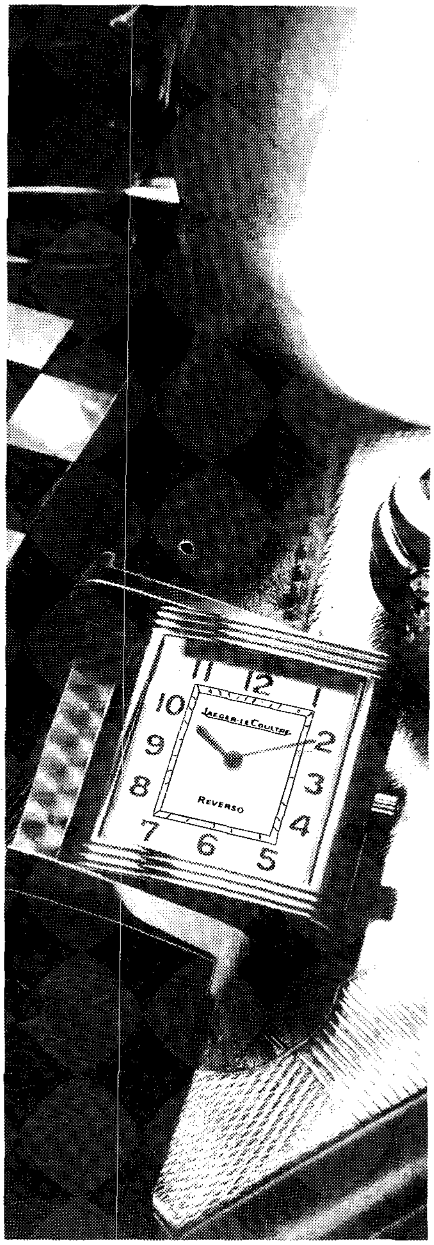

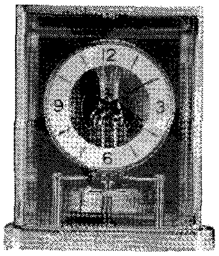

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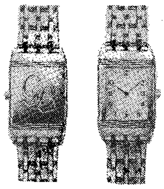

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ing with Sun Records, in 1955, he's written about a thousand songs, and has left his mark on everyone from Social Distortion, the L.A. punk band, to Bruce Springsteen, who seems to have written the material for "Nebraska" during a heavy Johnny Cash phase. Columbia recently released a three-CD retrospective of Cash's career.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—*Upstairs, there's a small, red-gold-and-green* cabaret. The invincible **HILDEGARDE** turns up on Dec. 20. A performer for seventy-one years, Hildegarde would be considered an "expert" *in any courtroom in the country.* She continues to be charming and chatty. She refers to her audiences as "my dear people"; she announces her own solos by chirping, "Take it away, girl"; she spins yarns; and she teeters about the stage with an endearing little-old-lady shtick. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A pretty serious jazz shrine. The **ENJA ALL STARS**—Willie Williams, Michael Formanek, and Uri Caine, to name a few—are here through Dec. 20. As of Dec. 22, the room will be home to "A Modern Portrait of Louis Armstrong," which will include performances by Doc Cheatham, Don Byron, and the Allen Lowe Orchestra. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

SWEETWATERS, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, *shrimp creole on the menu, and a sunken* dance floor with a circa-1975 mirrored disco ball. The stage is usually given over to soul and R. & B. **HAROLD MELVIN AND THE BLUE NOTES** perform Dec. 18-19.

TIME CAFÉ, 380 Lafayette St., at Great Jones St. (533-7000)—Hidden within this sleek and trendy restaurant is a two-story club called Fez. Upstairs is a sumptous Moroccan bar and lounge appointed with satin couches, mosaic tables, and Arabic-style fixtures. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is rather plain by comparison, but still a sleek and comfortable spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. The fourteen-piece ensemble, directed by trombonist **SAM BURTIS** and trumpeter **JACK WALRATH,** concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, Charles Mingus. Other events: Mild Thing on Dec. 18; Jeff Buckley and Katell *Keineg on Dec. 19; Chicas Locas on Dec.* 21. Dining.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to low lighting, muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored old tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. **URBAN BLIGHT** and **LOUP GAROU** share a bill on Dec. 19. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, *from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles* Davis and Sonny Rollins. The **BENNY GREEN** trio is on the premises through Dec. 20, and **EASTERN REBELLION,** featuring **CEDAR WALTON** and *others, starts up on Dec. 22. Mondays are* reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.**

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—This thoroughly Green night club is filled more or less nightly with young bands who like to play long, swirling jams and with throngs of young Deadheads who like to listen to them. Dec. 18 belongs to **CHUCKLEHEAD,** and Dec. 19 to **BABA OLATUNJI,** with Suns of Jubal. Olatunji is an expatriate Nigerian drummer and composer. He wrote the score for "A Raisin in the Sun," and, since the nineteen-fifties, when he released a record called "Drums of Passion," has been acknowledged as a leading authority on African dance and music.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

The glory of disco in its original incarnation was that it was all of a piece with its accompanying elements. Stretchy Nik-nik body shirts and Day-Glo Nyesta mini-dresses—what could have looked better on blow-dried dancing machines under the strobes? The heavenly battalions of brass showcasing Eddie Kendricks, Tavares, and Barry White were barely big enough to fill those cavernous palaces their sound defined. Every third word out of regulars' mouths was "fabulous." But everything and everyone at least looked the part.

Well, disco music has come back, but none of its trappings have. USA (218 West 47th Street) is yet another groovy conversion of a theatre (the former Minsky's) into a dance hall—déjà-vu all over again, down to its Rauschenbergian supergraphics in all the right places. But at a recent book party for Marky Mark, the V.I.P. lounge was filled with generic, reverse-baseball-hatted homeboyishness. Amid wood panelling that could have come from The Four Seasons' Grill Room, Mark set the tone by responding to every greeting with "Yo man, whassup?" The bare-bones sounds of "People Everyday," by Arrested Development, thumped and echoed enticingly across the dance floor. Onstage, a lone girl, wearing a very new, very tight long skirt, was trying her best to dance as she sang along with the refrain, "I, I... am everyday people." That's the problem, honey. You're supposed to be fabulous.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Next Wave Festival—Presenting "The Hard Nut," Mark Morris's adaptation of "The Nutcracker." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Dec. 16-18 and Dec. 22 at 7; Dec. 19 at 1 and 7; and Dec. 20 at 1. Through Dec. 27.)

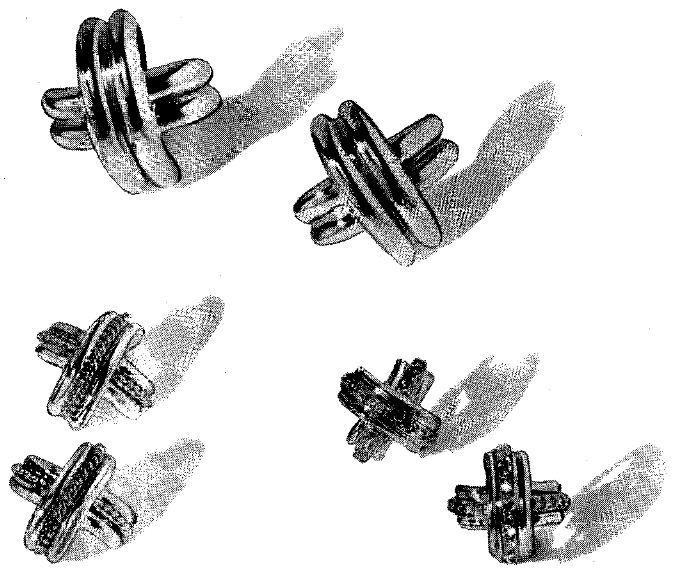
Radio City Christmas Spectacular—The sixtieth-anniversary edition of the show. The Rockettes will be kicking away and, in one number, playing glockenspiels. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. Through Jan. 6. For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777.)

Big Apple Circus—In its annual holiday engagement. Featuring the Flying Egorov Troupe, from Russia; a contortionist named Tunga, from Mongolia; and a host of others. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. Through Jan. 10. For information about show times and tickets, call 268-0055.)

Tim Miller—Performing a new work, "My Queer Body." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Dec. 17-20 at 7:30.)

La Mama—Dec. 17-20 at 8: "Underground," a work by Theodora Skipitares that uses puppets.... ¶ Dec. 17-19 at 10: "(Jackie's Dreaming of) A Brown Christmas." The folks from the club Jackie 60 present a song/dance/lip-synch/you-name-it holiday show. The cast includes Deborah Harry, Joey Arias, Robert La Fosse, and Chi Chi Valenti. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

O Solo Mio Festival—A series of one-person shows. Claudia Shear in "Blown Sideways Through Life," Dec. 16 at 8; Jim Fyfe in "A Normal Guy," Dec. 17 and Dec. 19 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 10:30; Fred Curchak in "Stuff As Dreams Are Made On," Dec. 17 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 10:30; and Fanni Green in "The Lake Land," Dec. 20 at 3. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989.)



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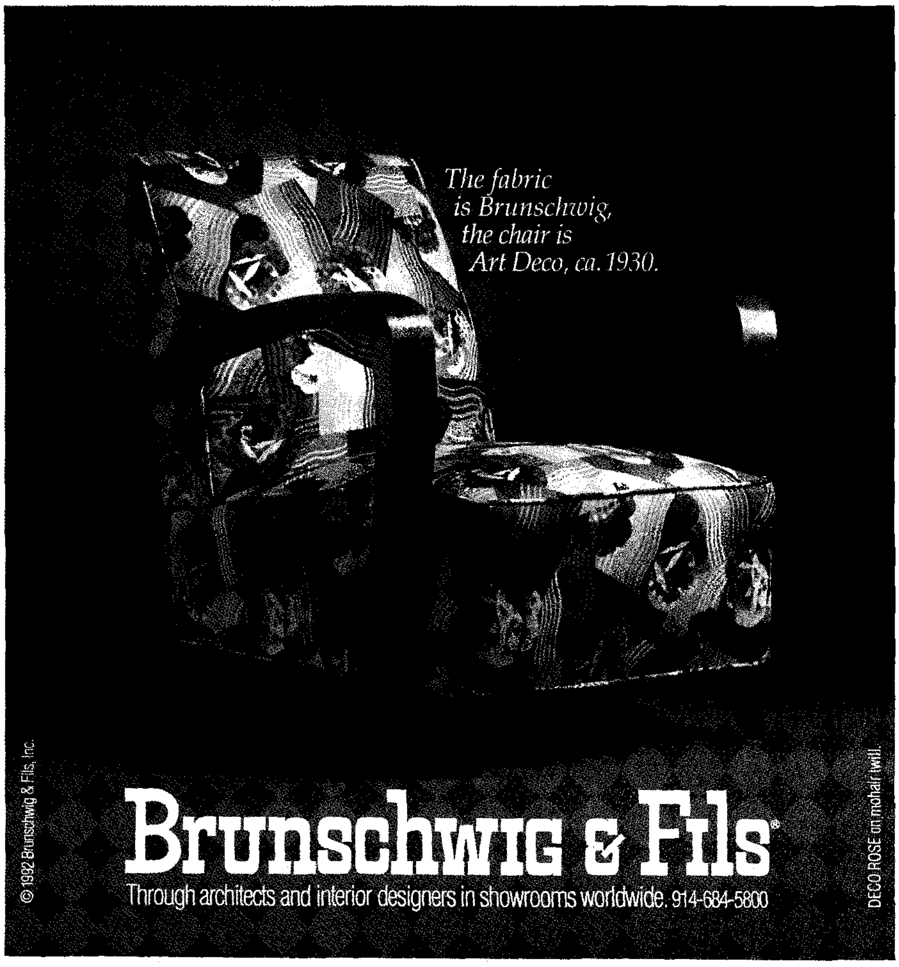

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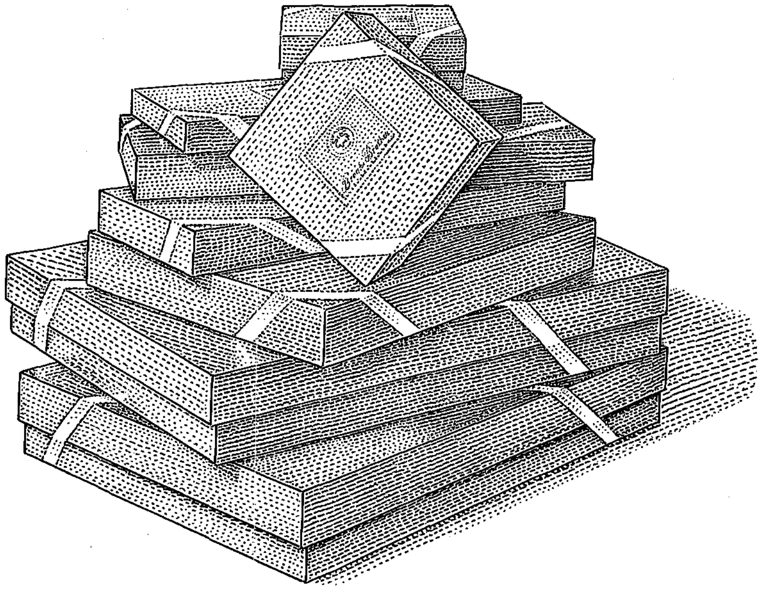

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ART

Cut Short

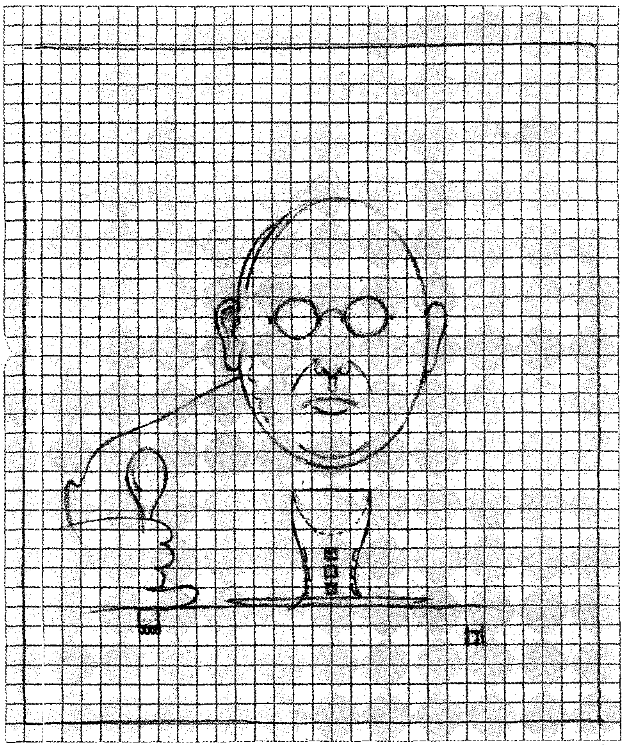
Frédéric Bazille, born in 1841 to a prominent Montpellier family, lived only long enough to brush up to early Impressionism. He was an exact contemporary of Renoir and Monet, and he worked closely with them when he was a truant medical student in Paris. The three posed for each other and egged each other on, and Bazille, the only *fils de famille* in this trinity, supported his friends financially at times as well. But he died in 1870, in the Franco-Prussian War, a few weeks short of his twenty-ninth birthday.

The Bazille exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum (through January 24) is essential but disconcerting. Two of Bazille's most ambitious and fully realized works remain at the Musée d'Orsay, and the crucial portrait in the show—a lanky Bazille hunched over his easel, with part of a Monet landscape peeking out from a wall—is by Renoir. Bazille's virtuosity as an Impressionist is perhaps most evident in a small painting of flowering bushes that, though signed, is obviously unfinished. There are, however, at least three outstanding Bazilles in Brooklyn, and they have in common a theme surprising for this heyday of the female nude: "The Improvised Field Hospital" is a portrait of Monet, as *homme fatal,* in bed after a minor accident, while "Fisherman with a Net" and "Summer Scene (Bathers)" are not only the cool Bazille's most impassioned works but also bracing homoerotic retorts to everyone else's *déjeuners sur l'herbe.*

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Fashion and History: A Dialogue" is the first installation in the redesigned Costume Institute. . . . ¶ Part 2 of "The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang" explores the pioneering abstractionist's influence on artists of the later seventeenth century. Through Jan. 10. . . . ¶ Twenty-five examples of elaborately inscribed and decorated medieval Islamic garments. Through March 14. . . . ¶ "Drawing for Design" includes sketches and finished pieces by designers, architects, and artists from Christopher Dresser to Robert Venturi. . . . ¶ "The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre." Two hundred works in copper, bronze, stone, and clay. Through March 7. . . . ¶ The show of paintings, drawings, and sculpture from the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, includes works by Rubens, Goya, Delacroix, van Gogh, Fra Bartolommeo, and others. Through Jan. 17. . . . ¶ Two series of color photographs by Shomei Tomatsu: one depicts *Sakura,* or cherry-blossom time; the other, flotsam and jetsam washed up on a beach. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ The museum's Christmas tree and Neapolitan crèche are on view. Through Jan. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Matisse retrospective has been extended through Jan. 19. (Plan wisely; call 708-9850 for ticket information. Tickets can be pur-



Josef Hoffmann at the IBM Gallery

CHARLES SLACKMAN

chased in advance, and a limited number of same-day tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis.)... ¶ Jana Štěrbák's new "Projects" installation, "Sisyphus II," consists of an egg-shaped metal sculpture and a black-and-white film. Through Jan. 5.... ¶ "New Photography 8," an exhibition of work by Dieter Appelt, Ellen Brooks, Darrel Ellis, Dennis Farber, Robert Flynt, Mary Miss, Gundula Schulze, and Toshio Shibata. Through Jan. 12.... ¶ A hundred and twenty-five books, by such artists as Giorgio de Chirico, Lucio Fontana, Francesco Clemente, and Giacomo Manzù, are on view in "The Artist and the Book in Twentieth-Century Italy." Through Feb. 16. (Museum hours through Jan. 19: open Sundays through Tuesdays, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Wednesdays, 12 to 6; Thursdays, 10:30 to 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932." This fertile period is evoked in an eclectic show, comprising experimental paintings of every level of quality, a tantalizing variety of revolutionary posters, textiles, and porcelains, and several superb architectural drawings and models. Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—Works that Robert Rauschenberg made between 1949 and 1954, before the appearance of the groundbreaking combines. Through Jan. 25.... ¶ "Marc Chagall and the Jewish Theatre." Through Jan. 17. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings until 10.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—It is the paradox of Agnes Martin's career that she has made soft, delicate paintings in a rigid grid format. Within her narrow vocabulary, she explores infinite variation. Though each painting in this retrospective is a perfect distillation of her oeuvre, the more you see, the more you want to see. Through Jan. 31.... ¶ In providing a historical context for the Martin show, "The Geometric Tradition in American Art, 1930-1990" includes work by Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, Donald Judd, and Burgoyne Diller. Through Feb. 14.... ¶ A retrospective of paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat. Through Feb. 14.... ¶ "Photography: Expanding a Collection" includes works by Cindy Sherman, Sally Mann, and Ana Mendieta. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Max Weber: The Cubist Decade, 1910-20." Sixty paintings and works on paper by the American modernist. Through Jan. 10.... ¶ "Frédéric Bazille: Prophet of Impressionism." Through Jan. 24.... ¶ Sixty sculptures by Auguste Rodin have been reinstalled in the Cantor Gallery. Among the works here are two independent pieces from "The Gates of Hell"; maquettes, studies, and four full-scale figures from "The Burghers of Calais"; and several versions of "Balzac."... ¶ "Dame of the Narrows" (1976), a large-scale sculpture of the Staten Island ferry arriving at the Manhattan terminal, by Red Grooms, Mimi Gross, and the Ruckus Construction Company, is currently installed in the lobby. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

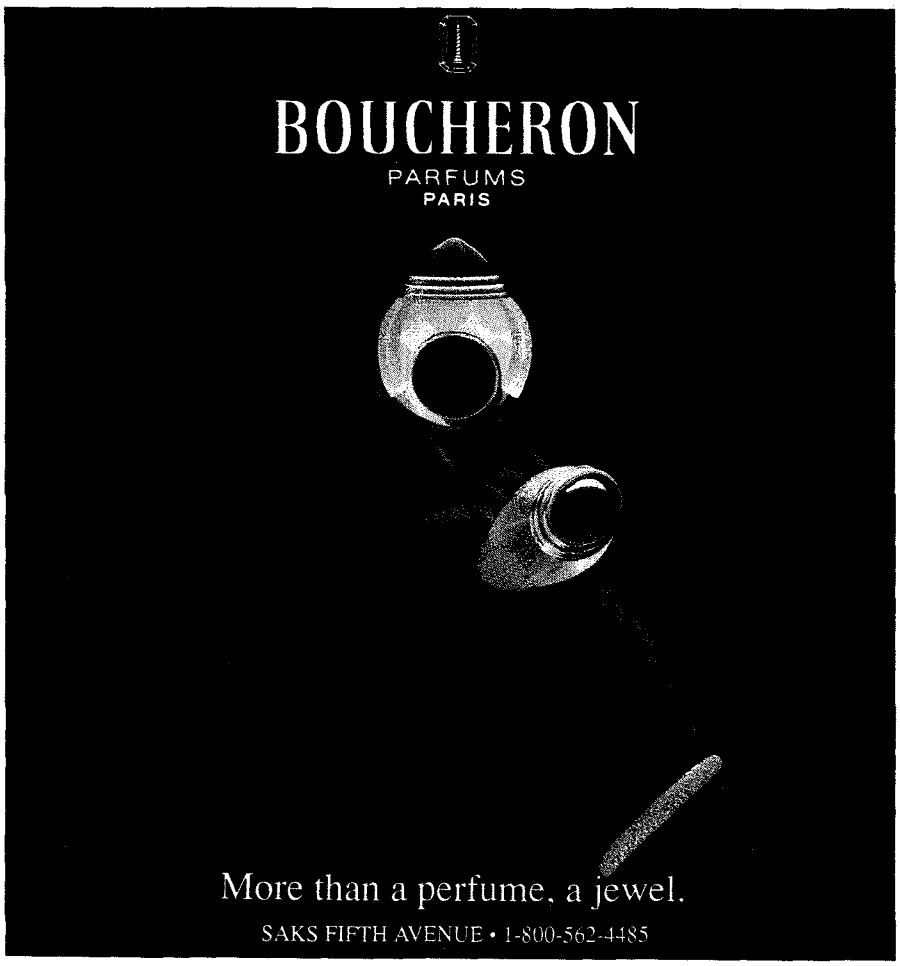
American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"This Is the American Earth," a show that highlights environmental concerns through landscape photographs by such artists as Ansel Adams, Margaret Bourke-White, Eliot Porter, Jacob Riis, and Minor White. Through Jan. 24.... ¶ The museum's annual origami tree is on view through Jan. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

IBM Gallery of Science and Art, Madison Ave. at 56th St.—"Josef Hoffmann: Designs." More than two hundred drawings and a hundred objects by the designer, architect, and co-founder of the *Wiener Werkstätte*. The wide range of work includes furniture, architectural models, fabrics, and bookbindings. All of the pieces are on loan from the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts. Through Jan. 23. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain." A hundred manuscripts, textiles, ceramics, and architectural fragments are on view. Through Dec. 20. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Dickens' manuscript for "A Christmas Carol," a hundred and forty-nine years old this winter, is on display in the entrance hall. Through Jan. 10.... ¶ More than a hundred medieval and Renaissance manuscript illuminations from the Breslauer Collection are on view.... ¶ "Printers and Miniaturists" shows off the finest in late-fifteenth-century Venetian illuminated books.... ¶ In "Thomas Jefferson: Tranquil Pursuits and Stormy Politics," one can see "Summary View of the Rights of America" (1774), his first published work; the library's copy of the first printing of the Declaration of Independence; personal letters to Elbridge Gerry (later v.p. under Madison); and letters to his daughter Martha. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Schomburg Center, 515 Lenox Ave., at 135th St.—A retrospective of paintings, watercolors, drawings, and textile designs by Lois Mailou Jones. Through Jan. 3. (Open Mondays through Wednesdays, noon to 8; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 5.)



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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Richard Diebenkorn / Andy Warhol (1930-87)—Eleven paintings (1968 to 1985) from the Ocean Park series. Diebenkorn, along with de Kooning, is the last artist left who sustains the grand authority of American abstract painting of the fifties. He has, however, taken some ribbing for essentially making the same painting over and over, which in a certain sense is a legitimate accusation. But, as this show demonstrates, there is also great variation in his paintings. / A show of drawings from the mid-eighties. Through Jan. 9. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. . . . ¶ A show of late paintings by Warhol is at Gagosian's downtown space, 136 Wooster St., through Jan. 30.)

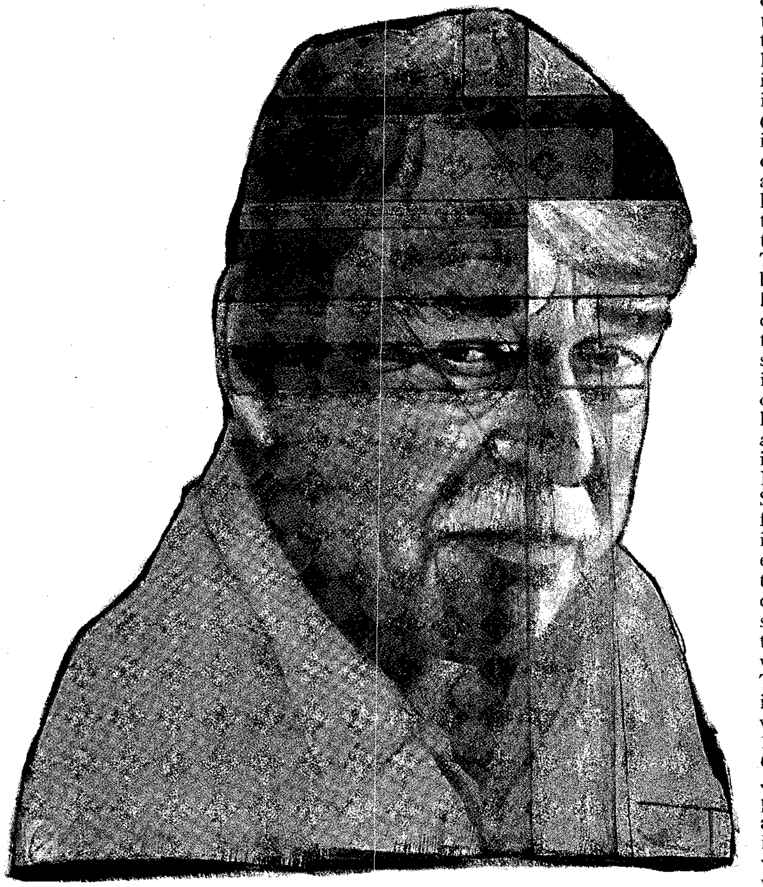
Short List—**WILLIAM BLAKE,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 31); **ANNE BLODGETT,** Marbella, 28 E. 72nd St. (through Dec. 19); **PETER CAIN,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through Jan. 28); **WILHELM LEHMBRUCK,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through Jan. 16); **FRANCISCO TOLEDO,** Martin, 23 E. 73rd St. (through Dec. 23).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Loren Madsen—A suspended copper sculpture—it looks like a mammoth seedpod—that has some marvellously expressive elements, from its welded ribs to its creepy, skinny legs. Through Dec. 23. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Pat Steir—A magisterial show of the artist's new "Waterfall" paintings, with new vibrant colors like ultramarine and an unfathomably deep, seasoned red. Through Dec. 31. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Short List—**RICHARD BAKER,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 16); **JOSÉ BEDIA,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 31); **STUART DAVIS,** Ulysses, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 31); **LUIS GORDILLO,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 2); **DAN GRAHAM,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 2); **LEON KROLL,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 9); **WALT KUHN,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Dec. 31); **LOUIS LOZOWICK,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 31); **GIORGIO MORANDI,** Baldacci-Daverio, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **ZORAN MUSIC,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **FAIRFIELD PORTER,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 23); **ROBERT RYMAN,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 9); **ART SPIEGELMAN,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 9); **LEONARD STOKES AND JOE NICASTRI,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 9).



Richard Diebenkorn at the Gagosian gallery

TIM BOWER

GALLERIES—SoHo

Harriet Korman—Recently on view at the Flynn gallery was a wonderful Korman painting from 1972 that seemed to define in the simplest, most lyrical way the shift from minimalism to post-minimalism. It made one wonder what had become of her. This show of new works, then, is very disappointing—programmatic paintings with lines and squiggles mapped out like plowed fields. These may well be the results of months of labor, but they look as though the artist could hardly wait to finish them. Through Dec. 23. (Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway.)

Allan McCollum—A rather ingenious show that puts a fresh spin on this artist's recurring critique of "the original." The subject here is the famous dog from Pompeii whose form was preserved by the volcanic ash that smothered him while he dutifully guarded his master's home. During excavation in the eighteen-seventies, plaster casts were made from the natural mold of the dog (and of many human forms). McCollum has filled the gallery with row after row of identical copies of this cast, and ultimately they leave the viewer cold. This, however, is probably intentional: the point is that the "original" (the dog) had to die in order for the volcanic mold to exist, and the mold, in turn, had to be destroyed to produce the nineteenth-century cast. Through Dec. 23. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

Daniel Oates—Fanatically executed sculptures' in different scales—from a few inches tall on up—depicting mindlessly happy workers. They are gender-segregated in pairs—Hank and Frank, Bella and Stella—and, except for their sexual coding, are surrealistic in every way, down to their hallucinatory craftsmanship. Of special interest are two huge uniforms with big bulbous shoes. They are monumental in a Disney sort of way. Through Dec. 19. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

Janis Provisor—This painter has not had a show in New York in six years. Provisor's earlier works were dramatic, opulent, multi-panelled abstract panoramas that recalled such disparate sources as Clyfford Still and Gustav Klimt. For this show, the artist seems to have simplified her approach. Most of the works here are single canvases depicting some rather fashionable-looking biomorphs, and her colors are much plainer and clearer than before. Through Dec. 23. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

Gerwald Rockenschaub—Save this Austrian artist's show for the end of your gallery-going day. The show consists exclusively of two modernist benches, placed catercornered to one another near the windows at the back of the gallery. The benches are black and their cushions red—the colors of revolutionary art—and thus these objects serve as a reminder, depending on how you view these things, of either the success or the failure of modernism at transforming daily life with an Everyman aesthetic. If there are other people in the gallery your experience may become more complex, in that you will find yourself either standing and looking at sitting visitors or sitting and having standing visitors look at you. If you sit facing the street, you will be looking at a wall painted Con Ed blue that looks very much like the paintings Rockenschaub used to paint. Through Dec. 19. (Koury, 89 Greene St.)

Juan Uslé—These new works by an accomplished Spanish abstract painter were made with a more defined brush than he had used in the past, and while they are as languid and sly as his earlier work, they are also more commanding. The large ones, with their high-keyed colors, are rather striking—at first glance, anyway. Yet the more time one spends with these paintings, the less robust they seem. They unfold only so far. Through Dec. 19. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Viswanadhan—The first American show of paintings by this noted Indian filmmaker. They are made of fat, bricklike horizontal and vertical brushstrokes in orange, red, green, and, sparingly, yellow. Their compositions recall tantric designs, except that the artist's technique produces a sense of spatial depth. The two largest paintings are overwhelmingly rich, sensuous in their austerity. Through Dec. 19. (Briet, 558 Broadway.)

"The Naturalist Gathers"—Douglas Blau, a critic and curator, is a special sort of collector. For this unusual show he has gathered nearly a thousand pictures, all reproductions, from both popular and fine-art sources. Blau seems most at home in archives—those consummate expressions of the collector—with their rows of meticulously numbered boxes and hall after hall of books and bones and shells. The curator seems to take for granted that it is the image, not its lineage, that is important; the show is arranged in a leisurely, rumpled order that is almost symphonic in its ebbs and flows. Through Dec. 19. (SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St.)

Short List—**JENNIFER BARTLETT,** Cooper, 149 Wooster St. (through Jan. 16); **ROBERT BEAUCHAMP,** Zarre, 154 Wooster St. (through Jan. 16); **ADOLF BENCA,** M-13, at 72 Greene St. (through Jan. 2); **DALE CHIHULY,** Cowles, 420 West Broadway (through Jan. 23); **LYDIA DONA,** Cugliani, 40 Wooster St. (through Dec. 31); **DON EDDY,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway (through Jan. 6); **KAREN FINLEY,** Lipton, 67 Prince St. (through Jan. 9); **KEITH HARING,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 16); **MIKE KELLEY,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through Jan. 8); **ED AND NANCY KIENHOLZ,** Louver, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 2); **ROY LICHTENSTEIN,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Dec. 19); **KEN LUM,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 16); **MARK MADEL,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. (through Dec. 19); **CHRISTIAN PHILIPP MÜLLER,** American Fine Arts, 40 Wooster St. (through Dec. 31); **ODD NERDRUM,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. (through Jan. 9); **GERHARD RICHTER,** Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway (through Jan. 30); **ANDREAS SCHÖN,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. (through Dec. 19); **SAUL STEINBERG,** Pace, 142 Greene St. (through Jan. 9); **JENNY WATSON,** Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through Dec. 31).

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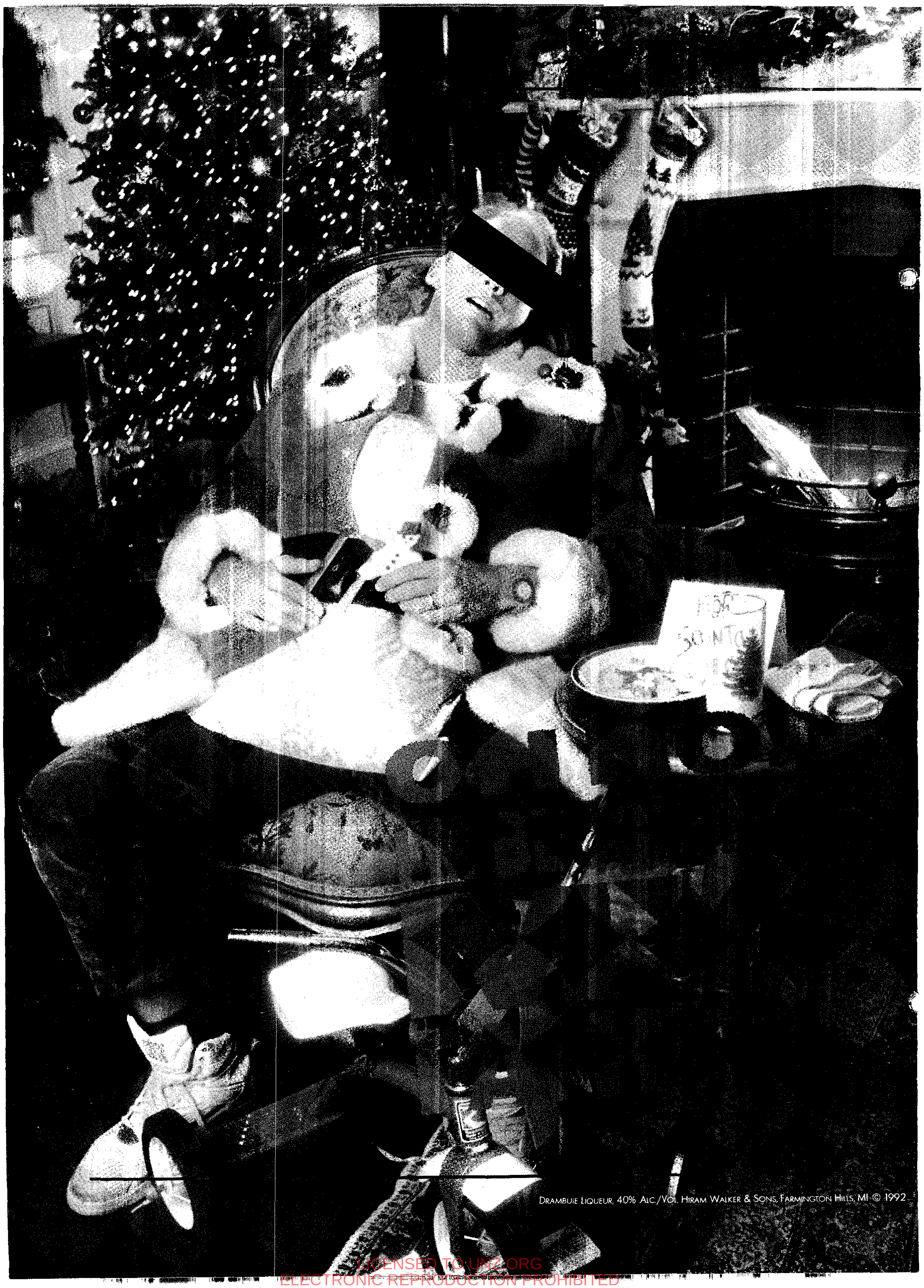

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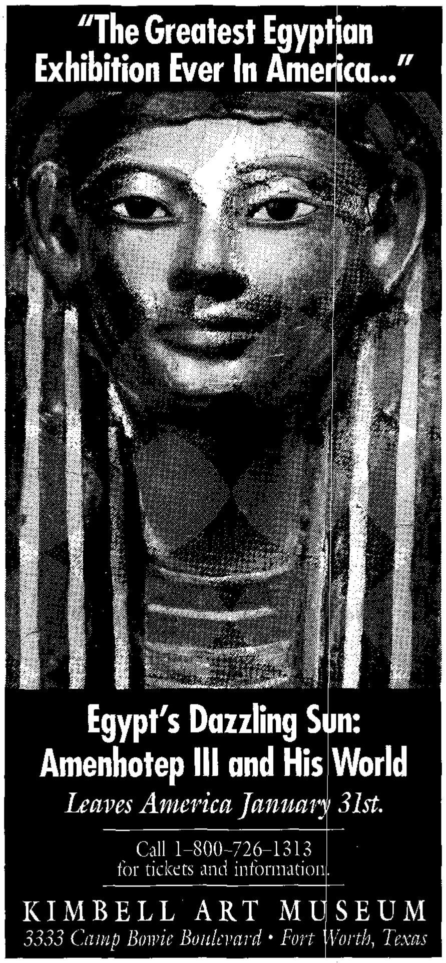

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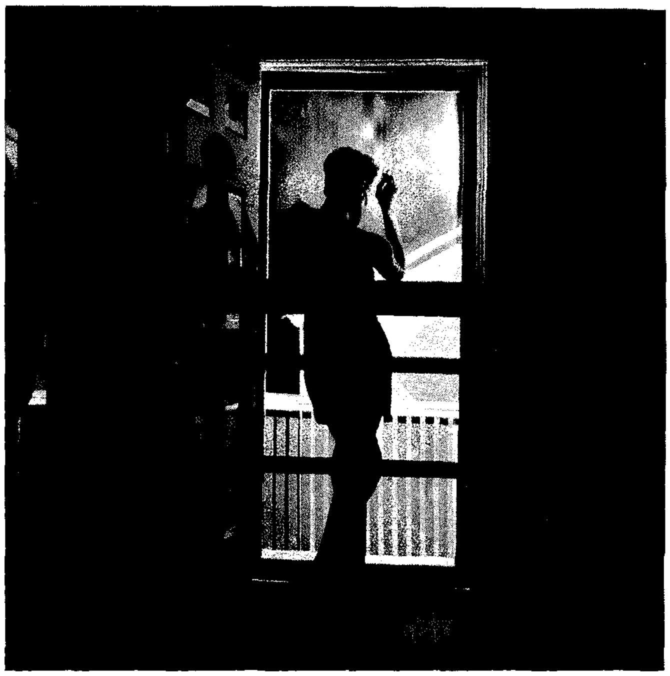

Self-portrait by Carrie Mae Weems

PHOTOGRAPHY

Worth a Thousand Words

BY now the Weegees and Capas of the world have been allowed into the pearly gates of art galleries, but it is still very rare to see newspaper photographs treated as though they were worthy of exhibition, let alone preservation. The John Post Lee gallery (588 Broadway) has now joined the ranks of those who challenge this bias—it has mounted an exhibition (through January 2) devoted exclusively to news images, culled, for the most part, from the 1992 record at the Associated Press.

In this setting, we get to see the photographs without surrounding print or attention-grabbing headlines, in a larger scale, and mostly in color, which changes the feeling of the pictures immeasurably. Some of the photographs are what you might expect—images of tragic, violent events, and, most formulaic of all, sports shots. But plenty of the photos are genuine finds, both for the information they contain and for how they look. Appropriately, Lee has even included an image that pokes fun at photojournalists: the much-reproduced shot—it's called "A Star is Born"—of lensmen stalking the Clinton cat, Socks. The cat looks at the viewer as if to say, "Is the world crazy or is it me?"

GUSTAVE LE GRAY (1820-82) / **ROBERT ADAMS**—Two groups of seascapes, taken about a hundred and forty years apart, that are breathtaking, both for their drama and for their technical beauty. In Le Gray's luminous images, the horizon line stimulates the viewer's imagination. Robert Adams' contemporary pictures were shot in the region of Oregon where the Columbia River meets the Pacific. They are so articulate that the waves seem to undulate in their frames. Also on view is a Le Gray series of luscious photographs, all in different tones, of Millet's copy of the "Mona Lisa." Through Jan. 30. (Lowinsky, 575 Broadway.)

CARRIE MAE WEEMS—"Sea Islands," a show of photographs, texts, and objects that explores the Gullah culture of the islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Through Dec. 23. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

"NEW PHOTOGRAPHY 8"—This MOMA series has dramatically expanded, and now includes eight artists instead of the customary three. The work varies widely in approach and in strength. It's hard to understand, for instance, why Mary Miss has been included, since her architectural photographs seem to be just travel versions of similar work done by another sculptor/photographer, Gordon Matta-Clark, more than twenty years ago. But it's wonderful to see the imagery of Darrel Ellis getting its due. His use of his father's family pictures makes for autobiographical works that are both tender and upsetting. Through Jan. 12. (Museum of Modern Art.)

"TROUBLED TIMES. . ."—This show features three artists whose street photography is legendary—Lisette Model, Louis Faurer, and Leon Levinstein. Almost all the works were shot in New York. Model's forties wartime pictures are images of loss, and of emotionally and physically wounded people, and Faurer's images, many of them from the mid-fifties, depict urban down-and-outs. Levinstein's photographs, from the late fifties and early sixties, document the early stages of the urban alienation and abandonment that have since become so widespread in the city. Through Dec. 31. (Sander, 105 Hudson St. Closed Tuesdays.)

SHORT LIST—**ELLEN CAREY**, Baum, 588 Broadway (through Jan. 9); **SALLY GALL**, Saul, 155 Spring St. (through Dec. 24); **JEAN KALLINA** and **JAN HENLE**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 16); **HIROJI KUBOTA**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through Jan. 31); **FRANK MAJORE**, Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 4); **MARTIN MUNKACSI** and **LILLIAN BASSMAN**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. (through Jan. 16); **RODNEY SMITH**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Jan. 16); **WEEGEE**, Borden, 560 Broadway (through Jan. 16).

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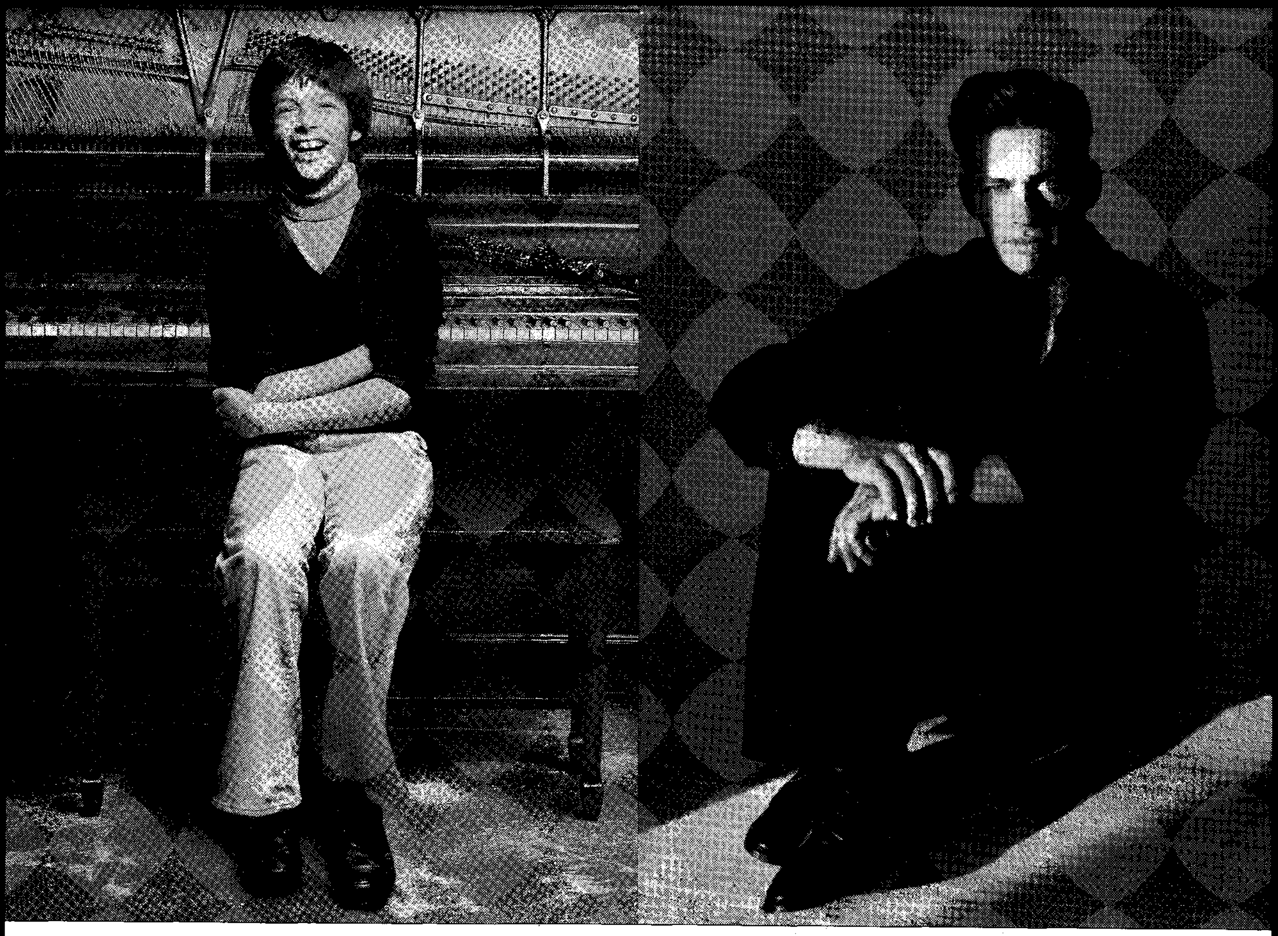

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MUSIC

Vox Populi

Two of the most glorious voices and straightforward personalities in postwar opera belonged to singers who died too young: Kathleen Ferrier in 1953, at the age of forty-one, and Fritz Wunderlich in 1966, at the age of thirty-five. The fate that denied them their prime years compensated in advance by giving them early and sustained popularity and lots of recording opportunities. Two big retrospectives on compact disc—ten disks of Ferrier (on London 433 802-2), five of Wunderlich (on Deutsche Grammophon 435 145)—combine their commercial recordings with broadcasts, including in both cases material that has not been widely available before.

Ferrier was a classic British oratorio contralto without any of the stodginess or sentimentality into which that (now rare) type could sometimes fall. Wunderlich was a classic German lyric tenor who never pinched his voice and never preened. Both had the most precious possession of all: a naturally beautiful, easy sound, a voice through which a soul could speak unhindered. When Wunderlich arches his voice over the first nostalgic line of Rodolfo's Act IV aria, everything that makes "La Bohème" valuable is captured in an instant. Ferrier can tease and cajole in English folk songs without being arch. They have the precise secret of making the familiar fresh; it's hard to imagine that any opera fan would not like them—and also hard to imagine that any Sinatra fan would not.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)

HOLIDAY MUSIC

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"—**VIRGIN CONSORT:** Kyler Brown directs the period-instrument ensemble, with soprano Julianne Baird, countertenor Drew Minter, tenor Paul Elliott, and bass Michael Dean. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. Dec. 16 at 7:30.). . . **MUSICA SACRA:** Directed by Richard Westenburg, with soprano Joyce Guyer, countertenor Michael Chance, tenor Steven Tharp, and bass-baritone David Evitts. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 16 and Dec. 22 at 8.). . . **BMCC DOWNTOWN SYMPHONY:** Douglas Anderson directs a sing-along (though non-participatory types may also attend). (Triplex, Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers St. Dec. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.). . . **ST. THOMAS CHOIR AND CONCERT ROYAL:** Gerre Hancock directs the chorus and baroque orchestra; with soprano Christine Brandes, countertenor Drew Minter, tenor Mark Bleeke, and baritone Curtis Streetman. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 757-7013, ext. 3003. Dec. 17 at 7:30.). . . **NATIONAL CHORAL COUNCIL:** The organization's twenty-fifth annual sing-along, with twenty-three conductors taking their turns at the podium. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 18 at 8.). . . **ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK:** Lyndon Woodside directing, with soprano Ruth Golden, mezzo-soprano Gwenneth Bean, tenor Bradley Diamond, and bass-baritone Richard Zeller. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 21 at 8.)

VINEYARDMUSICKE—Soprano Rachel Rosales and Baroque guitarist Patrick O'Brien assist the early-instrument ensemble in Baroque and traditional music from Mexico, including popular dances, Christmas folk songs, and villancicos by Francisco de Santiago, Antonio de Salazar, and Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (all of whom were associated with the Puebla Cathedral). (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Dec. 16 at 8.)

I CANTORI DI NEW YORK—Members of the a-cappella chorus perform seasonal music in a setting of unusual elegance: the Italian Renaissance library imported from the ducal palace of Urbino by a former resident at this address. Included on the program are ancient and modern carols, as well as motets by Victoria, Bruckner, and Poulenc. (House of the Redeemer, 7 E. 95th St. 289-0399. Dec. 17 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK CITY GAY MEN'S CHORUS—Gary Miller directs a seasonal program that will include familiar carols in arrangements by Libby Larsen, Stephen Paulus, and Conrad Susa; the New York première of Mr. Susa's "Winter Serenade"; and selections featuring soprano Roberta Peters. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 17-18 at 8.)

ANONYMOUS 4—The vocal quartet, whose finely tuned recording of a fourteenth-century English Lady Mass has been turning heads this fall, performs medieval hymns, conducti, sequences, and motets, with an interlacing narration (adapted from "The Golden Legend") about old St. Nicholas. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Dec. 18 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE—Robert Bass directs the group—plus childrens' choruses from the 92nd Street Y and the Hunter College Elementary School—in excerpts from Handel's "Messiah" and "Judas Maccabaeus"; with soprano Virginia Grasso, mezzo-soprano Kim Sylvain, tenor Bradley Williams, baritone Michael Dash, and organist Kent Tritle. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Dec. 18 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

"AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS"—Menotti's Christmas opera, with a cast that includes soprano Gianmarco Marostica and mezzo-soprano Cynthia Rose; with Dino Anagnost conducting the Little Orchestra Society. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 19 at 1 and 3.)

GRACE CHURCH CHORAL SOCIETY—Bruce McInnes directs the first three cantatas of Bach's Christmas Oratorio. (Broadway at 10th St. Dec. 20 at 3. Admission by contribution.)

ST. LUKE'S CHOIRS AND CHAMBER ENSEMBLE—David Shuler directs Britten's "Saint Nicolas" and "A Hymn to the Virgin," Herbert Howells' "Three Carol Anthems," and Samuel Scheidt's "Christmas Magnificat" of 1635. (Church of St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St. 633-2167. Dec. 20 at 4.)

POMERIUM MUSICES AND THE BALTIMORE CONSORT—Alexander Blachly directs carols, anthems, and motets from the English Renaissance. (Medieval Sculpture Hall, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 20 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

TRINITY CHURCH CHOIR—Owen Burdick directs the choir and a period-instrument orchestra in Bach's Magnificat (with the Christmas interpolations), Cantata No. 191, and Fifth "Brandenburg" Concerto. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. 602-0873. Dec. 20 at 4. . . . **NOTE:** The concert will be repeated, but without the cantata, on Dec. 21 at noon. Admission by contribution.)

RIVERSIDE CHAMBER CHOIR AND THE AULOS ENSEMBLE—Arlan Sunnarborg directs a Bach motet and Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," and the instrumentalists play chamber works by Corrette, Daquin, and Vivaldi. (Medieval Sculpture Hall, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 21 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

AULOS ENSEMBLE—Performing chamber works and concerti grossi by Telemann and Bach (including the Fifth "Brandenburg" Concerto). (Medieval Sculpture Hall, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

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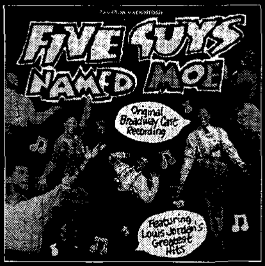
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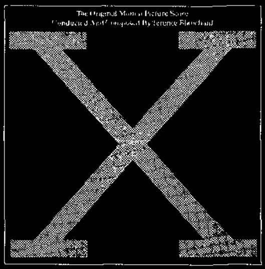

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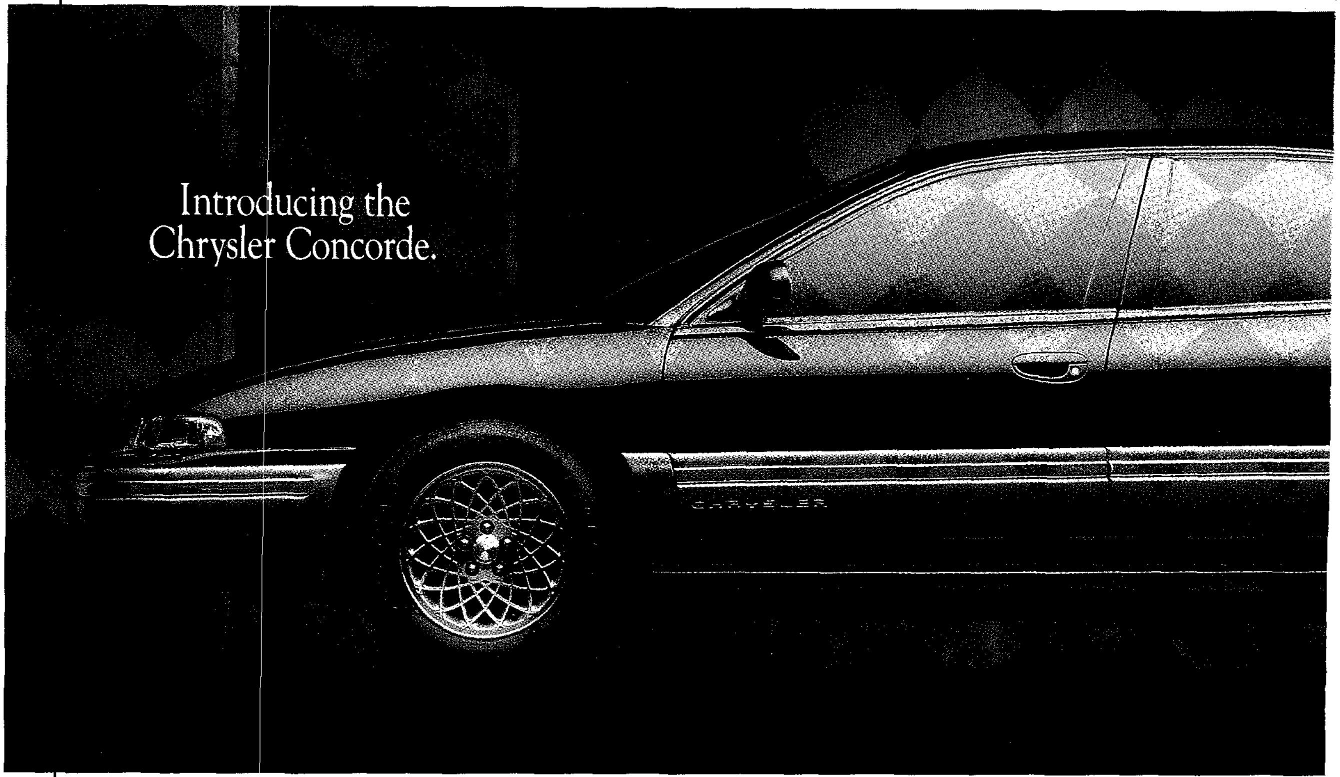

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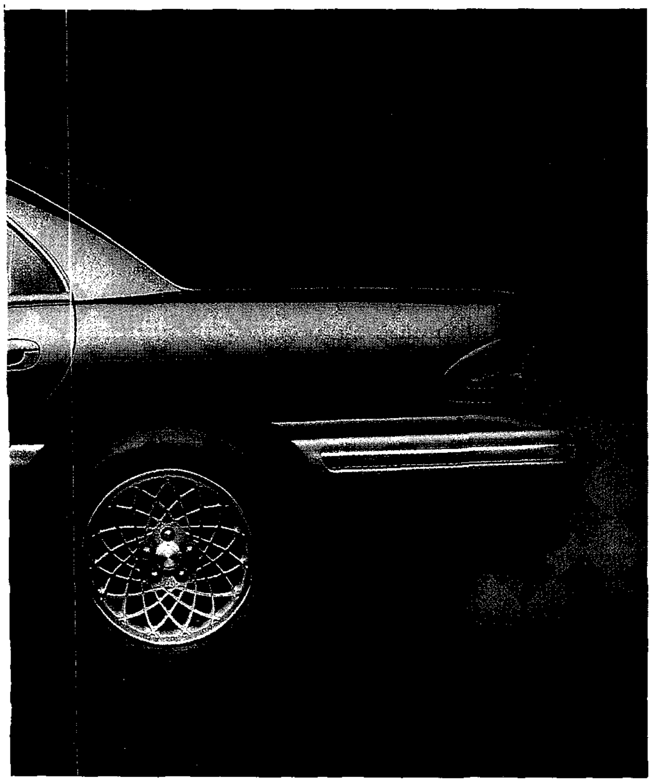

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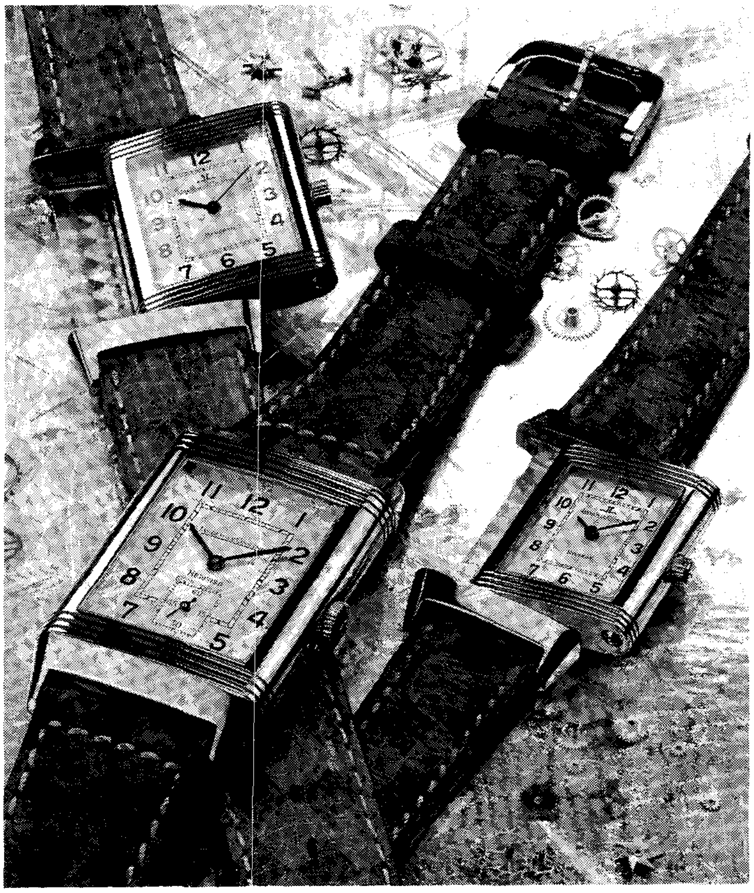

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MUSIC–Cont'd

Boston Camerata—Joel Cohen directs his early-music ensemble in a program that explores the Christmas story through the medieval and traditional musical repertoires of the Latinized lands bordering on the Mediterranean, from Istria and Tuscany to Catalonia and the Languedoc. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Dec. 22 at 8.)

Holiday Hodgepodge—Carol settings from the choir, hearty singing from the audience, and William Trafka at the impressive organ. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. Dec. 16 at 12:10 P.M. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Carols, hymns, and readings of the season, with Johnson Flucker leading the choristers. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 20 at 3:30.). . . ¶ Christmas music from many nations, with David Weadon and Debbie Truxal directing the choirs. (Brick Church, Park Ave. at 91st St. Dec. 20 at 5. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Phil Kline's "Carolling," a mobile performance work in which the twenty-four participants carry boom boxes. (Leaving from First Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 12th St., and proceeding south, around Washington Square, down LaGuardia Place and West Broadway, and east on Spring St. Dec. 20 at 7.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**EUGENE ONEGIN,** with Mirella Freni, Birgitta Svendén, Jerry Hadley, Sergei Leiferkus, and Nicolai Ghiaurov; conducted by Seiji Ozawa. (Dec. 16 and Dec. 22 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 1:30.). . . **DIE WALKÜRE,** with Gwyneth Jones, Jessye Norman, Hanna Schwarz, Gary Lakes, James Morris, and Aage Haugland, not to mention all those leaping Valkyrie sisters (Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donder, Blitzen, Grimgerde, and Schwertleite); James Levine. (Dec. 17 and Dec. 21 at 6:30.). . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR,** with June Anderson, Franco Farina, Juan Pons, and Paul Plishka; Marcello Panni. (Dec. 18 at 8.). . . **JENUFA,** with Gabriela Beňačková, Leonie Rysanek, Ben Heppner; James Conlon, and Jacque Trussel; (Dec. 19 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," in a bilingual (Italian and English) version by Anthony Amato, who will conduct. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 18-19 at 7:30 and Dec. 20 at 2:30.)

Miao-Li Hakka Yodel Troupe—The Hakkas of Taiwan, descendants of the Han Chinese who immigrated to the south in the twelfth century, numbered among their cultural achievements a style of "mountain singing," reminiscent of yodelling, that stood at the heart of their vocal entertainments. Though the traditional Hakka style was essentially extinct in Taiwan, musicologist Cheng Rom-Shing managed to recapture elements of the style through academic research in (of all places) Paris. Mr. Cheng will direct the twenty-member Miao-Li Troupe in an exploration of the two major prongs of Hakka musical theatre: comic, flirtatious chamber opera and "grand operas" derived from tales recounted during tea picking. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Dec. 18-19 at 7:30 and Dec. 20 at 2.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Charles Dutoit conducting. Dec. 16 at 6:45: Berlioz's "Béatrice et Bénédict" Overture and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1 (a brief program, with a reception following, for those who care to linger). . . . ¶ Dec. 17 and Dec. 19 at 8, and Dec. 18 at 11 A.M.: The above-mentioned Berlioz and Tchaikovsky items, plus Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony.

Concordia—Marin Alsop conducts the chamber orchestra in Bernstein's "Prelude, Fugue and Riffs" (featuring clarinettist Walt Levinky) and "Chichester Psalms" (with the Goliard Chorale), as well as Duke Ellington's jazz arrangement of a suite from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 17 at 8.)

St. Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra—David Randolph directs Mendelssohn's "Elijah." (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 19 at 8.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein conducts works he considers to be sonic counterparts to the geometric American art works currently featured at the Whitney Museum; specifically, Henry Cowell's "Synchrony," Ruth Crawford-Seeger's "Three Songs" (to texts by Carl Sandburg, with mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato), Wallingford Riegger's "Music for Orchestra," Copland's "Connotations," Sessions' "Symphony No. 5," Feldman's "On Time and the Instrumental Factor," and Steve Reich's "Music for Pieces of Wood." (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 3, preceded at 1:45 by a lecture by Mr. Botstein.)

Greenwich Village Orchestra—Robert Grehan conducts Bach's First "Brandenburg" Concerto and Cantata No. 51 (with soprano Margaret Astrup), as well as Stravinsky's "Pulcinella Suite." (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Dec. 20 at 3. Tickets at the door on the day of the concert.)

RECITALS

Chamber Music at the Y—The only chamber music richer than a Brahms string sextet is—let's see, that would have to be *two* Brahms sextets. Since it's the season to not count calories, those who care to indulge themselves may wish to take in both of his sextets on the same program, as delivered by violinists Jaime Laredo and Ida Kavafian, violists Michael Tree and Steven Tenenbom, and cellists Sharon Robinson and Peter Wiley. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Dec. 16 at 8.)

Tokyo String Quartet—The foursome plays Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8; cellist Gary Hoffman joins them for a Boccherini quintet; and violist Toby Hoffman completes the ensemble for Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence." (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 16 at 8.)

Duo Tedesco—The guitar duo of Barbara and Eugène Hoelzer will play nineteenth-century music by Rossini, Ferdinando Carulli, Napoleon Coste, Mauro Giuliani, and Johann Kaspar Mertz, as well as a recent sonata by Carlo Domeniconi. Noteworthzy instruments will be employed: both musicians play guitars built by the nineteenth-century French luthier René François Lacote, whose instruments occupy roughly the same stature among some guitarists as the classic Cremonese violins do among fiddlers. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 16 at 8.)

American String Quartet—The ensemble performs quartets by Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 127) and Bartók (his Fourth). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Dec. 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Chamber music by Schumann, Grieg, and Dvořák, with violinist Scott St. John, cellist Ronald Thomas, and pianist Joseph Villa. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Dec. 17 at 7:30 and Dec. 20 at 4.)

Music by Robert Moevs—Solo and chamber works. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. Dec. 17 at 8.)

Dmitry Rachmanov—Pianist, performing an all-Beethoven program: three sonatas (Op. 13;

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Op. 31, No. 3; and Op. 110) and the Variations on an Original Theme (Op. 34). (Nicholas Roerich Museum, 319 W. 107th St. Dec. 18 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800—Presenting soprano Dana Hanchard, Baroque violinist Evan Johnson, and harpsichordist Jocelyn Stewart in a German Baroque program that will include a Christmas cantata by Telemann, seasonal arias by Bach, and a harpsichord suite from Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer's "Musicalischer Parnassus." (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-0675. Dec. 20 at 4.)

S. E. M. ENSEMBLE—The group, which proclaims its dedication to "post-Cagean" music, presents Cage's "Concert for Orchestra" and pieces (by other composers) that emanated from the experimental-music classes the composer conducted at the New School in the late nineteen-fifties. (Paula Cooper gallery, 155 Wooster St. Dec. 22 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 488-7659.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

DANZIG—It's the special time of year when touring rock bands come to town and sing about... Satan! This omni-derivative and skilled L.A. metal band, which is not so crass as to croon about Old Nick by name, is most notable for recording on rap impresario Rick Rubin's Def American label. Ring those hell's jingle bells. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Dec. 19 at 8.)

BILLY TAYLOR TRIO—With Frank Wess. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Dec. 17 at 7.)

JESSE DAVIS—With Junior Mance, Cecil McBee, and Bernard Purdie. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Dec. 18 at 6. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

RICHARD STOLTZMAN—With the Boys Choir of Harlem, Dave Samuels, Eddie Gomez, and others. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 18 at 8.)

CLARENCE FOUNTAIN & THE FIVE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA—Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Dec. 18 at 8.

BODYCOUNT—With several other bands. (Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Dec. 18 at 8.)

ALISON FRASER AND RUSTY MAGEE—Manhattan Class Company, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Dec. 18-19 at 11:30 P.M.

INKHAY—Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Dec. 19 at 8.

BENEFIT CONCERT—Lee Ranaldo, Ikue Mori, and Zeena Parkins. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. Dec. 19 at 9.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

GIANTS—Vs. the Kansas City Chiefs, Dec. 19 at 12:30.

KNICKS—Vs. the Miami Heat, Dec. 19 at 7:30.

NETS—Vs. the Sacramento Kings, Dec. 20 at 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, Dec. 22 at 7:30.

RANGERS—Away until Dec. 23, when they face the Devils.

ISLANDERS—Vs. the Ottawa Senators, Dec. 17 at 7:35.

DEVILS—Vs. the Rangers, Dec. 21 at 7:35.

(The Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111; the Knicks and the Rangers at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Nets and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

HORSES—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8 and Tuesdays at 1; Sundays at 6:45.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HOLIDAY ROUNDUP—It's that time of year. Everything's a little more crowded and you've heard "Jingle Bell Rock" one time too many. Relax. Sing a different tune and contemplate the following.

. . . **STARRY, STARRY NIGHT**—The annual "Star of Christmas" show at the American Museum–Hayden Planetarium. (81st St. at Central Park W. For information about times and tickets, call 769-5900. Through Jan. 3.)

. . . **ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH**—Dec. 16 at 6:30: The Empire Brass, with harpist Nancy Allen. . . . Dec. 20 at 3: Lavender Light Gospel Choir. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. No tickets necessary.)

. . . **HERE COMES THE SUN**—The annual solstice celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine includes performances by the Paul Winter Consort, Celtic soprano Noírín Ní Riain, gospel singer Kecia Lewis-Evans, the Dimitri Pokrovsky Singers, and a reading by Peter Matthiessen. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 17-18 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 2 and 8.). . . ¶ Mummers and revellers, carols and ritual dances are all part of the annual Christmas Revels. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Dec. 17-18 at 8, Dec. 19 at 3 and 8, and Dec. 20 at 1 and 5.)

. . . **HANUKKAH HELLO**—The thirty-foot-high menorah on Fifth Ave. at 59th St. will be lit at around 8 P.M. on Dec. 19, for the first of eight nights.

. . . **AWAY IN A MANGER**—Bethlehem on 69th Street. A free outdoor Christmas pageant, complete with live sheep and a donkey. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 West 69th St. Dec. 19-24 at 5:30.)

. . . **'TWAS THE NIGHT**—"A Christmas Memory," by Truman Capote, will be read each night by a duo of stars, including Mercedes Ruehl, Tyne Daly, and Wendy Wasserstein. (Book-Friends Café, 16 W. 18th St. Dec. 18-19 at 8 and Dec. 20 at 7. For tickets, call 564-8038.). . . ¶ Readings throughout the afternoon of the Clement C. Moore classic. (Old Merchant's House, 29 E. 4th St. Dec. 20, from 1 to 4. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the readings.)

KUMBAYA—Performances and demonstrations about things African: the diaspora, rites of passage, and mathematical and musical games. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. Dec. 19-20 from 1 to 4:30. No charge beyond museum admission.)

GOTTA DANCE—Dec. 19 from 10:45 to 12:30: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre will sponsor a workshop to give participants hands-on experience in the Ailey style. (For more information and tickets, call 581-1212.). . . ¶ Dec. 19 from 2 to 5: Tea dance to the tunes of Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks, with special guests Doc Cheatham and Chuck Folds. (Chartwell Booksellers arcade, 55 E. 52nd St. No tickets necessary.)

WORDS—Dec. 16 at 8: Simon Ortiz and Chuck Wachtel will read from their own work. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Dec. 16 at 9:30: Max Blagg will read from a new work titled "Five Days." (Time Café, 380 Lafayette St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 7: Marianne Wiggins will read from her own work. (Limbo, 47 Ave. A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

RETRO-PERSPECTIVE—Dec. 17 at 6:30: Frank Stella, Anthony Caro, and John Elderfield will discuss the work of Henri Matisse. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Tickets at the door on the night of the discussion.)

WALKS—Dec. 19 at 1: Historic sites of Catholic New York, sponsored by Big Onion Walking Tours. For information, call 439-1090. . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 1: East Village Reds and robber barons, sponsored by Radical Walking Tours. For more information, call 1-718 492-0069. . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 2: Architectural highlights along the way from Waldorf Towers to Trump Tower, sponsored by N.Y.C. Cultural Walking Tours. For more information, call 979-2388.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 39.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (directed by Mike Newell).
Theatre 2: "The Crying Game" (Neil Jordan), with Stephen Rea and Forest Whitaker.
Theatre 3: "In the Soup" (Alexandre Rockwell), with Seymour Cassel and Steve Buscemi.
Theatre 4: "My New Gun" (†).
Theatre 5: "Simple Men" (Hal Hartley), with Robert Burke and William Sage.
Theatre 6: "Bad Lieutenant" (Abel Ferrara), with Harvey Keitel.

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
"Night and Day" (Chantal Akerman, in French).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 2: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Bodyguard" (†).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 3: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 4: "A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford), with Craig Sheffer and Brad Pitt.
Theatre 5: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 6: "Forever Young" (Steve Miner), with Mel Gibson, Elijah Wood, and Isabel Glasser.
Theatre 7: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 2: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (James Foley), with Al Pacino and Jack Lemmon.
Theatre 3: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).
Theatre 4: "Aladdin" (†).
Theatre 5: "Howards End" (James Ivory).
Theatre 6: "The Distinguished Gentleman."
Theatre 7: Through Dec. 17: A program of films from Korea. From Dec. 18: To be announced.

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: Theatre closed. From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).
Theatre 3: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 5: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).
Theatre 6: "Aladdin" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Flirting" (John Duigan).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 2: "The Distinguished Gentleman"
Theatre 3: "Aladdin" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia and Uma Thurman. From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).
Theatre 3: "Passenger 57" (Kevin Hooks).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"A Few Good Men" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Under Siege" (Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 2: "The Distinguished Gentleman."

JEFFREY FISHER

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"The Last of the Mohicans" (Michael Mann), with Daniel Day-Lewis.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Reservoir Dogs" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Passenger 57" (Kevin Hooks), with Wesley Snipes.
Theatre 2: "Husbands and Wives" (Woody Allen).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Jennifer Eight" (Bruce Robinson), with Andy Garcia and Uma Thurman.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Used People" (Beeban Kidron), with Shirley MacLaine, Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, and Marcello Mastroianni.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "Night and the City" (Irwin Winkler), with Robert De Niro and Jessica Lange. From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Aladdin" (†).
Theatre 2: "Bad Lieutenant" (Abel Ferrara), with Harvey Keitel.
Theatre 3: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)
"Venice/Venice" (Henry Jaglom), with Nelly Alard and Jaglom.

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 2: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 3: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 4: "A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford), with Craig Sheffer and Brad Pitt.
Theatre 5: "Singles" (Cameron Crowe).
Theatre 6: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 2: "Malcolm X" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"A Few Good Men" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Love Field" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "The Bodyguard" (†). From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
Through Dec. 19: "Passion Fish" (John Sayles), with Mary McDonnell, Alfre Woodard, and David Strathairn.
From Dec. 20: To be announced.

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Forever Young" (Steve Miner), with Mel Gibson, Elijah Wood, and Isabel Glasser.

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford), with Craig Sheffer and Brad Pitt.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†). From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).
Theatre 5: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).
Theatre 6: "Forever Young" (Steve Miner), with Mel Gibson, Elijah Wood, and Isabel Glasser.
Theatre 7: Through Dec. 17: "The Bodyguard" (†). From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 2: "Aladdin" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: A program of five short films.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Daddy and the Muscle Academy" (directed by Ilppo Pohjola, in English and Finnish) and "Time Expired" (Danny Leiner).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "The Last of the Mohicans" (Michael Mann), with Daniel Day-Lewis.
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "Of Mice and Men" (Gary Sinise), with John Malkovich and Sinise. From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Singles" (Cameron Crowe).
Theatre 2: Through Dec. 17: "Night and the City" (Irwin Winkler), with Robert De Niro and Jessica Lange. From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

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RANDOM HOUSE

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Becoming Colette" (Danny Huston), with Klaus Maria Brandauer.
Theatre 2: "Reservoir Dogs" (†).
Theatre 3: "Husbands and Wives" (Woody Allen).
Theatre 4: "Johnny Stecchino" (Roberto Benigni, in Italian), with Benigni.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 3: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 5: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Dec. 17: "A Few Good Men" (†). From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.
Theatre 7: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 8: "The Distinguished Gentleman."
Theatre 9: "Forever Young" (Steve Miner), *with Mel Gibson, Elijah Wood, and Isabel* Glasser.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 2: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Aladdin" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "Becoming Colette" (Danny Huston), with Klaus Maria Brandauer.
Theatre 3: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 4: "Husbands and Wives" (Woody Allen).
Theatre 5: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (James Foley), with Al Pacino and Jack Lemmon.
Theatre 6: "A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford), with Craig Sheffer and Brad Pitt.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Mr. Saturday Night" (Billy Crystal).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
Through Dec. 17: Theatre closed.
From Dec. 18: To be announced.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through Dec. 17: Theatre closed.
From Dec. 18: To be announced.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Flirting" (John Duigan).
Theatre 2: "Enchanted April" (Mike Newell).

Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Lover" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Howards End" (James Ivory).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Forever Young" (Steve Miner), with Mel Gibson, Elijah Wood, and Isabel Glasser.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (Alain Corneau, in French), with Jean-Pierre Marielle, Gérard Depardieu, Anne Brochet, and Guillaume Depardieu.
Theatre 2: "The Match Factory Girl" (Aki Kaurismaki).
Theatre 3: "Waterland" (†).
Theatre 4: "Intervista" (Federico Fellini, in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg.
Theatre 5: "Tous les Matins du Monde."
Theatre 6: "Close to Eden" (Nikita Mikhalkov, in Russian).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
Through Dec. 17: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through Dec. 17: "The Bodyguard" (†). From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 3: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 4: "A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford), with Craig Sheffer and Brad Pitt.
Theatre 5: "Aladdin" (†).
Theatre 6: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Howards End" (James Ivory).
Theatre 2: "The Last of the Mohicans" (Michael Mann), with Daniel Day-Lewis.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).
Theatre 2: "Passenger 57" (directed by Kevin Hooks), with Wesley Snipes.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Under Siege" (directed by Andrew Davis), with Steven Seagal.
Theatre 2: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 4: "Passenger 57" (Kevin Hooks), with Wesley Snipes.
Theatre 5: "Malcolm X" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Dec. 17: "Passenger 57." From Dec. 18: "Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (Brian Henson).
Theatre 2: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 3: Through Dec. 17: "Consenting Adults" (Alan J. Pakula), with Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Kevin Spacey. From Dec. 18: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through Dec. 17: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (†).
From Dec. 18: "Leap of Faith" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Dec. 16: "Sleuth" (1972, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine; and "There Was a Crooked Man . . ." (1970, Mankiewicz), with Kirk Douglas and Henry Fonda.
Dec. 17: "Three Comrades" (†); and "Our Daily Bread" (1934, King Vidor), with Karen Morley and Tom Keene.
Dec. 18-19: "Julius Caesar" (1953, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with James Mason, John Gielgud, and Marlon Brando; and "Five Fingers" (1952, Mankiewicz), with Mason, Danielle Darrieux, and Michael Rennie.
Dec. 20: "Cleopatra" (1963, Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison, and Roddy McDowell.
Dec. 21: "Million Dollar Legs" (†) and "If I Had a Million" (†).
Dec. 22: "The Honey Pot" (†).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Dec. 16: "Goldfinger" (1964, Guy Hamilton) and "From Russia with Love" (1964, Terence Young), both with Sean Connery.
Dec. 17: "It's a Wonderful Life" (†); and "A Christmas Story" (1953, Bob Clark), with Melinda Dillon, Darren McGavin, and Peter Billingsley.
Dec. 18-19: "The Godfather" (1972, Francis Ford Coppola), with Marlon Brando and Al Pacino; and "The Godfather Part II" (1974, Coppola), with Pacino, Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton, and Robert De Niro.
Dec. 20: "Rebecca" (1940, Alfred Hitchcock), with Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier; and "The Spiral Staircase" (1948, Robert Siodmak), with Dorothy McGuire, George Brent, Ethel Barrymore, and Kent Smith.
Dec. 21: "Pauline at the Beach" (1982, Eric

Rohmer; in French); and "Summer" (1986, Eric Rohmer; in French).

Dec. 22: "Dark Victory" (1938, Edmund Goulding), with Bette Davis, George Brent, and Geraldine Fitzgerald; and "Now, Voyager" (1942, Irving Rapper), with Davis, Paul Henreid, and Claude Rains.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Dec. 17 at 2:30: "The Keyhole" (1933, directed by Michael Curtiz), with Kay Francis, George Brent, and Glenda Farrell; and "Private Detective 62" (1933, Curtiz), with William Powell, Margaret Lindsay, and Ruth Donnelly.... ¶ Dec. 17 at 3 and 6: "All in the Same Boat" (1992, Ivan Rossenov), a documentary.... ¶ Dec. 17 at 6 and Dec. 19 at 2: "Black Fury" (1935, Curtiz), with Paul Muni, Karen Morley, William Gargan, Barton MacLane, and John Qualen.... ¶ Dec. 18 at 2:30: "Goodbye Again" (1933, Curtiz), with Warren William, Joan Blondell, and Genevieve Tobin.... ¶ Dec. 18 at 3 and Dec. 19 at 5: "Happy Birthday, Turk!" (1991, Doris Dörrie; in German and Turkish).... ¶ Dec. 18 at 6 and Dec. 21 at 2:30: "Front Page Woman" (1935, Michael Curtiz), with Bette Davis, George Brent, and Roscoe Karns.... ¶ Dec. 18 at 6 and Dec. 20 at 2:30: 'My Daughter Is Mine" (1992, Vivian Naefe; in German and Greek).... ¶ Dec. 19 at 2:30 and Dec. 21 at 6: "Life for Life—Maximilian Kolbe" (1991, Krzysztof Zanussi; in Polish).... ¶ Dec. 19 at 5 and Dec. 22 at 6: "Stolen Holiday" (1937, Curtiz), with Kay Francis, Claude Rains, and Ian Hunter.... ¶ Dec. 20 at 2 and Dec. 21 at 6: "Captain Blood" (see below).... ¶ Dec. 20 at 5 and Dec. 22 at 2:30: "The Walking Dead" (1936, Michael Curtiz), with Boris Karloff and Ricardo Cortez.... ¶ Dec. 20 at 5 and Dec. 22 at 3: "Scream of Stone" (1991, Werner Herzog), with Vittorio Mezzogiorno, Mathilda May, Donald Sutherland, and Brad Dourif.... ¶ Dec. 21 at 3 and Dec. 22 at 6: "Love at First Sight" (1992, Rudolf Thome).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Dec. 16 at 2 and 6: "Without You I'm Nothing" (1990, John Boskovich), with Sandra Bernhart.... ¶ Dec. 16 at 3:45: "Torch Song Trilogy" (1988, Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin.... ¶ Dec. 17 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "Truck Stop Women" (1974, Mark L. Lester).... ¶ Dec. 17 at 3:45 and 7:15: "Stunts" (1977, Lester).... ¶ Dec. 18 at 2, 6, and 10 and Dec. 19 at 6: "King of New York" (1991, Abel Ferrara), with Christopher Walken, Larry Fishburne, and David Caruso.... ¶ Dec. 18 at 4 and 8 and Dec. 19 at 8: "Deep Cover" (1992, Bill Duke), with Larry Fishburne and Jeff Goldblum.... ¶ Dec. 19-20 at 2: "Simon Small Moves In" (1990, Staffan Götestam).... ¶ Dec. 19 at 4 and 10: "Reefer Madness" (1936).... ¶ Dec. 20 at 4 and 8 and Dec. 21 at 2: "Wise Blood" (1979, John Huston), with Brad Dourif, Ned Beatty, Harry Dean Stanton, and Amy Wright.... ¶ Dec. 20 at 6 and Dec. 21 at 4: "The Rapture" (1991, Michael Tolkin), with Mimi Rogers.... ¶ Dec. 22 at 2: "Wedding in Blood" (1974, Claude Chabrol; in French), with Stéphane Audran and Michel Piccoli.... ¶ Dec. 22 at 4: "Pump Up the Volume" (1990, Allan Moyle), with Christian Slater, Samantha Mathis, Cheryl Pollak, Scott Paulin, and Ellen Green.

MOVIES IN BRIEF

SEE PRECEDING PAGES FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS. IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Derring Do

THREE years before he became the most dashing Robin Hood in the movies, Errol Flynn proved his panache at righting wrongs in his Hollywood breakthrough, the stirring and ebullient 1935 swashbuckler "Captain Blood" (playing December 20-21, at the Museum of Modern Art). Based on Rafael Sabatini's 1922 novel (Michael Curtiz directed, Casey Robinson did the adaptation), this sweeping adventure about sixteenth-century pirates of the Caribbean set the pattern for Flynn's greatest successes, including his excursion into Sherwood Forest.

Here Flynn is Peter Blood, a peaceful doctor who makes the mistake of treating a rebel during the tumultuous reign of King James II and ends up a slave in Jamaica. Olivia de Havilland plays the feisty, sympathetic niece of the tyrannical British slave-owner. Blood and a barracksful of enslaved rebels (good men all) make their escape by stealing a Spanish ship and becoming buccaneers. (Not surprisingly, that firebrand Oliver Stone is contemplating a remake.) At one point, de Havilland says, "I believe you're talking treason." Flynn replies, "I hope I'm not obscure." (It presages the exchange in "The Adventures of Robin Hood" when de Havilland exclaims, "You speak treason!" and Flynn responds, "Fluently.") In his autobiography, "My Wicked, Wicked Ways," Flynn wrote that "youthful and virile roles" like cowboys and swordsmen "require gusto and genuine interest—such as I had felt at the time I was making 'Captain Blood' and 'Robin Hood.'" He's right: in these movies, his exuberance irradiates the screen.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Aladdin—Spiffy, inventive, and hilarious. The directors, John Musker and Ron Clements, who collaborated on the screenplay with Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, streamline the traditional Aladdin story into a contest between the boy and a towering vizier-wizard named Jafar, Aladdin's rival for the hand of the Sultan's daughter, Princess Jasmine. What makes this wisecracking cartoon such intense, giddy fun is the eruption of uninhibited parody that Robin Williams provides as the voice of the Genie in Aladdin's lamp. The Genie mutates into dozens of variations on himself as Williams impersonates everyone from William F. Buckley, Jr., to Arsenio Hall. The animators' quick-draw craftsmanship keeps up with Williams' breakaway creativity. With the voices of Scott Weinger, Linda Larkin, Jonathan Freeman, and Gilbert Gottfried (who unexpectedly triumphs as Jafar's tough parrot, Iago); composer Alan Menken contributes five songs, with lyrics by Tim Rice and the late Howard Ashman.—M.S. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/30/92.) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Bodyguard—According to the screenwriter (and co-producer), Lawrence Kasdan, the script for this picture was written in 1975 as a possible vehicle for Steve McQueen. In lieu of McQueen, Kevin Costner plays the title character, a retired Secret Service man who is hired to protect a famous singer (played by Whitney Houston). Costner sports a fuzzy crewcut that's more travesty than homage, and he's very grim; he looks as if he were still troubled by inconsistencies in the Warren Commission report. Houston, in a variety of glitzy costumes, belts a few forgettable songs for the soundtrack album and flings herself repeatedly at the taciturn hero,

W. C. Fields, Alison Skipworth, and Cecil Cunningham in "If I Had a Million"

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IN BRIEF–Cont'd

begging him for both sex and manly state-of-the-art security. The movie, directed by Mick Jackson, is a formulaic and ruinously long thriller that might have been more fun if its absurdities had been played as high camp. (The climax is an assassination attempt at the Oscar ceremony.) It is, perhaps, a sign of progress that a big-budget commercial picture like this can feature a romance between a white man and a black woman without ever making the racial difference an issue. It would be a more encouraging sign if the movie were any good. Also with Michele Lamar Richards and Gary Kemp.—T.R. (12/14/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ New York Twin, and 84th Streeet Sixplex; through Dec. 17.)

Bram Stoker's Dracula—The filmmakers can't put this fiasco off on poor Stoker. What makes the picture so peerlessly ridiculous is the style, not the story. The screenplay, by James V. Hart, embellishes a simple, classic tale with killer-diller thrills and special-effects opportunities; and the director, Francis Ford Coppola, executes every dreadful idea with ferocious, near-fanatical enthusiasm. The movie is conceived as a vampire saga in the modern, eroticized manner—horror to make women swoon like Victorian maidens—but it isn't very scary, and it isn't romantic. Gary Oldman, who plays Dracula, is perfectly opaque and remote in the seduction scenes: he has no sex appeal. The picture just keeps coming at us indefatigably, unstoppably, as if it were pursuing us through eternity, and it leaves us feeling mysteriously drained. This is no ordinary movie: it has the appalling persistence of the undead. Also with Anthony Hopkins, Winona Ryder, Keanu Reeves, Sadie Frost, and Tom Waits.—T.R. (11/30/92) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Bay Cinema, Orpheum VII, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . ¶ Astor Plaza; through Dec. 17. . . . ¶ Embassy; starting Dec. 18.)

A Few Good Men—Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson square off in this yuppie version of "The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial," with Cruise as a glib, Harvard-trained Navy lawyer defending two Marines accused of murder, and Nicholson as the Captain Queeg-like officer who set the crime in motion. The writer, Aaron Sorkin (who adapted his own hit play), and the director, Rob Reiner, seem to think the story has something to say about legal and military honor. They take issues that have been chewed over for centuries and finally succeed in reducing them to cud. The whole film, with its steady, important-picture pacing, its foursquare visual style, and its pseudo-profundity, is a piece of glorified banality. Nicholson boasts a couple of bravura scenes but Kevin Bacon gives the most persuasive performance, as the no-nonsense prosecutor. With Demi Moore, Kevin Pollak, Kiefer Sutherland, J. T. Walsh, and Christopher Guest.—M.S. (12/14/92) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York—The director, Chris Columbus, and the producer-writer, John Hughes, use the first "Home Alone" as a template. Leaning hard on the sensitive-brat charm of the eleven-year-old Macaulay Culkin, they duplicate and exaggerate every laugh-getting, tearjerking separation and reunion, every crowd-pleasing gibe and gambit. This time, young Kevin McCallister mistakenly boards a plane to Gotham while his folks fly off to Miami for their Christmas vacation. The filmmakers pump up the volume on the schmalz and sadism, hoping to attain a hyperbolic balance. What they achieve is double overkill. Culkin is directed as if he were an animatronic doll. He screams, he pouts, he proclaims "Yes!" Either you're captivated or you want to muzzle him. The new characters include Brenda Fricker as a homeless woman who devotes herself to pigeons, and Tim Curry, Dana Ivey, and Rob Schneider as nincompoop hotel workers. The repeat performers include Catherine O'Hara and John Heard (as Kevin's parents), and Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern (as Kevin's slapstick nemeses).—M.S. (11/30/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and National Twin. . . . ¶ Regency; through Dec. 17.)

The Honey Pot (1967)—Joseph L. Mankiewicz wrote and directed this movie, based on Frederick Knott's play "Mr. Fox of Venice," which was adapted from Thomas Sterling's novel "The Evil of the Day," which was based on Ben Jonson's "Volpone." And the movie feels at that far a remove from the play (which was filmed by Maurice Tourneur in French in 1939, starring Harry Baur and Louis Jouvet). In this overcomplicated, talk-infested Mankiewicz version, set in the present day, Rex Harrison is Cecil Fox, reputedly a millionaire, who lives in Venice. After attending a performance of "Volpone," he decides to trick three of his ex-mistresses (Edie Adams, Capucine, and Susan Hayward) into believing he's dying. The story then plunges into conventional twentieth-century mystery, complete with a bungling detective, misleading clues, and flickering electric lights. Even Mankiewicz may have wondered how he was going to get out of the whole damn thing. Maggie Smith is also around. Originally it ran a hundred and fifty minutes, but it was cut to a hundred and thirty-one minutes; count your blessings.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 22.)

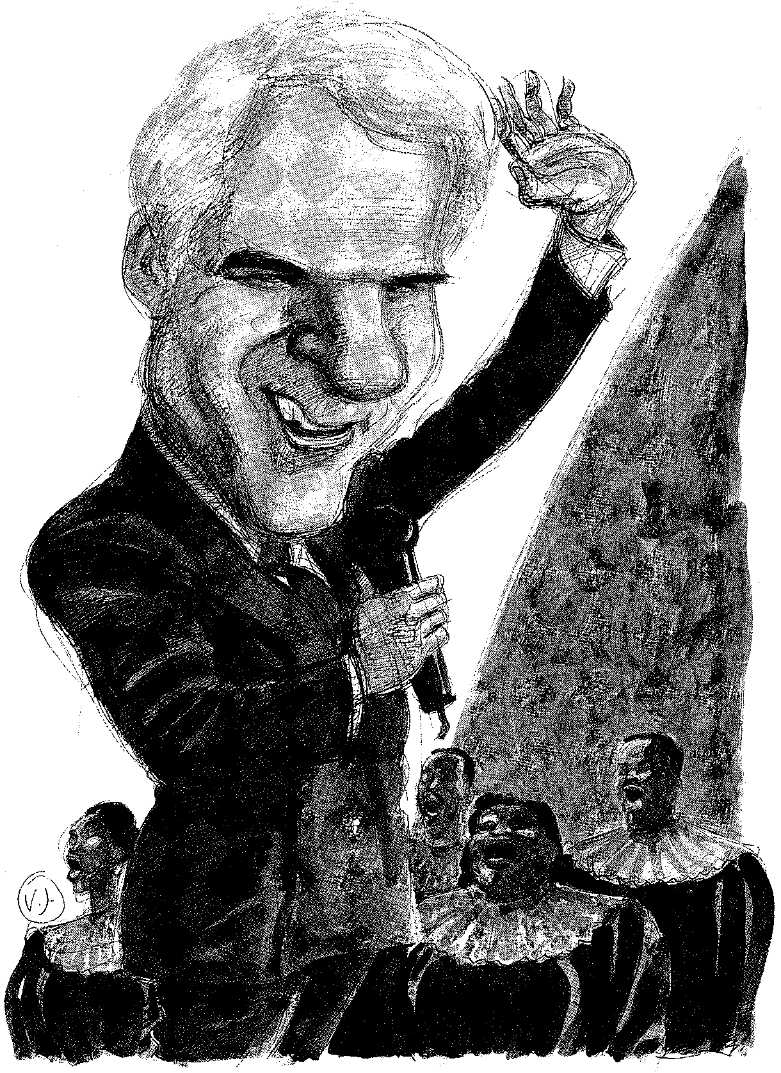
If I Had a Million (1932)—Perhaps the best of the American all-star episode films of its era. Each brief story has a different comic flavor. The cast includes W. C. Fields, Alison Skipworth, Charles Laughton, Gary Cooper, Mary Boland, Jack Oakie, George Raft, and Wynne Gibson as the prostitute who, given a million dollars, goes to bed alone. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch, among others.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 21.)

It's a Wonderful Life (1946)—Frank Capra's most relentless lump-in-the-throat movie. The hero (James Stewart) is a self-sacrificial good man who runs a small-town building-and-loan association that is threatened by the local ogre, the wickedly selfish Lionel Barrymore. Thinking he has no resources left, the hero is on the brink of suicide when he is given a vision of what life would be like for his family and his town if he had never been born. Donna Reed plays his wife, Gloria Grahame is the town "fast" girl, and the excruciatingly familiar cast includes Thomas Mitchell, Henry Travers, Beulah Bondi, Ward Bond, H. B. Warner, and Samuel S. Hinds. In its own slurpy, bittersweet way, the picture is well done. But it's fairly humorless, and, what with all the hero's virtuous suffering, it didn't catch on with the public. The picture developed a considerable—if bewildering—reputation, based largely on television viewing, about three decades later.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Dec. 17.)

Leap of Faith—With Steve Martin, Debra Winger, Lolita Davidovich, Liam Neeson, and Lukas Haas; directed by Richard Pearce. (See illustration on page 43.) (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza; starting Dec. 18.)

Love Field—Jonathan Kaplan's movie begins in Dallas on the day of John Kennedy's assassination and follows its heroine, a Kennedy-worshipping married woman named Lurene (Michelle Pfeiffer), as she embarks on a journey from Dallas to Washington, where she hopes to attend the President's funeral. Along the way, she gets herself tangled up in the lives of a quiet young black man, Paul (Dennis Haysbert), and his eight-year-old daughter, Jonell (Stephanie McFadden), whom she has met on a bus; before long, the script (by Don Roos) contrives to set them all on the run, outlaw-style, in a stolen car. Lurene and Paul become lovers. The rhythm is odd: this is a chase picture that moves at the Sunday-drive pace of the stately sedan in "Driving Miss Daisy." (The filmmakers seem to have taken to heart the Supreme Court's famous desegregation formula: they proceed to the climax with all deliberate speed.) The movie is full of subtle, sharply observed, and emotionally convincing scenes, and its attitude toward the main characters is sensibly free of historical hindsight. The filmmakers err in the direction of modesty and tact; too often, they settle into a flat, lulling TV-movie tone. But Pfeiffer's performance—energetic, funny, and lucid—keeps lifting the picture above its limitations. The leisurely rhythm that Kaplan and Roos establish is like a steady, familiar slow-blues groove to set off her spectacular solo. Also with Brian Kerwin and Louise Latham.—T.R. (12/14/92) (New York Twin.)

The Lover—Jean-Jacques Annaud's version of Marguerite Duras's autobiographical novel, about her sexual coming of age in 1929 Saigon, is a singularly empty moviegoing experience. Annaud simply illustrates the love story of the Young Girl (Jane March) and the Chinese Man (Tony Leung), and uses Duras's narration (spoken by Jeanne Moreau) whenever he's absolutely pressed to articulate what's happening. As the Man proclaims his love and the Girl tries out her budding wiles on him, the film becomes a game of "She loves me, she loves me not." Although the stars expose their bodies with aplomb, Annaud stages their grappling so self-consciously that you tire of their flesh. Screenplay by Annaud and Gerard Brach.—M.S. (11/16/92) (Fine Arts.)


Steve Martin in "Leap of Faith"

VICTOR JUHASZ

Malcolm X—There's a great deal of passion in Spike Lee's three-hour-and-twenty-minute adaptation of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," but it's not an artist's passion. Malcolm, who achieved fame in the early sixties as a compelling spokesman for the black-pride philosophy of the Nation of Islam, is an unlikely hero for a big-studio prestige picture: he begins as a predatory street criminal, becomes a studious Muslim ascetic, and fulfills himself as a scourge. The movie doesn't provide readers of the autobiography anything like a fresh vision of its remarkable subject. The ponderous rhythms of the great-man bio-pic only emphasize the impossibility of rendering this story with conventional movie-narrative means. Denzel Washington's performance as Malcolm gets off to a rocky start—for the first hour, he's required to play the hero as a teen-ager—but it gains authority as the movie goes along. This film's Malcolm isn't so much a character as an image: a statue for us to look up at in wonder. Also with Angela Bassett, Delroy Lindo, Albert Hall, Spike Lee, and Al Freeman, Jr. (a wonderfully sly turn as the hero's mentor, Elijah Muhammad). The script, credited to Lee and Arnold Perl, incorporates (haphazardly) scenes and ideas from a scenario written more than twenty years ago by James Baldwin.—T.R. (11/30/92) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

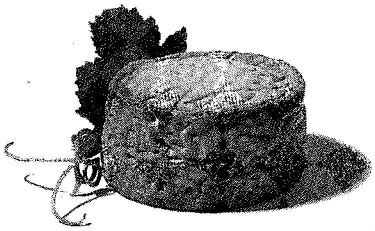
Million Dollar Legs (1932)—One of the silliest and funniest picture ever made: a lunatic musical satire on the Olympics, with W. C. Fields, Jack Oakie, Andy Clyde, Ben Turpin, and Lyda Roberti singing "It's Terrific." The Mankiewicz brothers (Herman J. and Joseph L.) worked together on this one, and Edward Cline directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 21.)

My New Gun—The heroine of Stacy Cochran's movie is a young New Jersey housewife named Debbie Bender (Diane Lane), whose husband buys her a revolver she doesn't want. This husband, Gerald (Stephen Collins), is a smug radiologist who dominates his wife completely: when he announces that the Bender household—a condo overlooking a golf course—needs a firearm, that's it. The gun itself is a little more than a pretext and a lot less than a symbol: it serves mostly to get her involved in the mysterious life of her across-the-street neighbor, Skippy (James LeGros), a scruffy, shifty-eyed young man who has a big crush on her. LeGros is wonderfully sly and seductive, and Diane Lane's delicately funny performance conveys the movie's exploratory sensibility with thrilling clarity: she makes us feel the risky joy of venturing beyond your own narrow plot and becoming a part of someone else's story. Cochran—a recent film-school graduate—gives the dull suburban setting a surprising richness and beauty.—T.R. (11/2/92) (Angelika Film Center.)

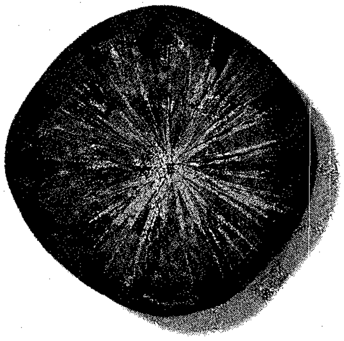
Reservoir Dogs—Most of the action in Quentin Tarantino's pulp crime movie takes place in a cavernous warehouse, to which the surviving participants of a botched jewelry heist have repaired to lick their wounds. The crooks amuse themselves by accusing each other of treachery (*someone* tipped off the police), waving their guns, screaming obscenities, and torturing a cop whom one of them has captured. This is, explicitly, a man's world. Tarantino emphasizes the characters' absurdity; they're all presented as demented children, little boys with big guns. The movie runs on film-school cleverness—a homemade pharmaceutical cocktail of pop music, visual jolts, and allusions to Scorsese and Peckinpah. As supercool young directors go, Tarantino (whose first film this is) is fairly engaging: his nihilism is antic and oddly cheery. But the picture is less than the sum of its outrageous gags and inventive bits of business. This is a reasonably lively picture about nothing, and that's apparently just what it was meant to be. With Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Steve Buscemi, Michael Madsen, Lawrence Tierney, and Chris Penn.—T.R. (10/19/92) (Plaza, and Quad Cinema.)

Three Comrades (1938)—Scott Fitzgerald worked on many films, but this is one of the rare ones that actually retain his spirit. ("Winter Carnival" is another.) Bits of the dialogue are elegantly romantic, and the atmosphere has his distinctive chivalrous quality. Margaret Sullavan, slender and special, and with her ravishing huskiness, is an ideal Fitzgerald heroine—a perfect Daisy—and she brings her elusive, gallant sexiness to this First World War romance, taken from a Remarque novel. It's conventional and heavy and false in the M-G-M manner, but with this delicate Fitzgerald feeling rising out of it at times. The movie is still awful; it has a particularly offensive tearjerking score by Franz Waxman. Produced by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. (Fitzgerald's letter imploring him not to change the dialogue has been published.) The script is credited to Fitzgerald and Edward A. Paramore. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Robert Taylor, Franchot Tone (who is tight-faced here—he's probably conscious of how terrible he is), and Robert Young.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 17.)

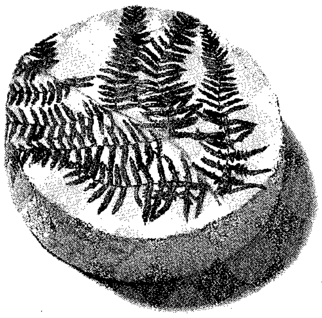
Waterland—Tom Crick (Jeremy Irons), the protagonist and narrator of Stephen Gyllenhaal's film, is a middle-aged history teacher immobilized by his own past. The 1983 novel, by Graham Swift, from which the picture has been adapted is a determinedly inward-looking work: unpromising material for a film. And this hero—a hopeless, defeated, rumpled-corduroy man, marking time as he slides inexorably toward decrepitude and merciful oblivion—isn't the sort that movie audiences tend to clasp to their bosoms. Yet the picture is, in its gray way, absorbing and often moving. The screenwriter, Peter Prince, has streamlined the novel's twisty narrative very intelligently. And the actors are awfully good. Grant Warnock and Lena Headey, the young performers who play Tom and his wife-to-be in flashback sequences, bring a convincing and touching adolescent gravity to their roles. Irons imparts a whiff of something like madness to his character's middle-aged desperation. His performance lifts the movie to the top of the rueful-retrospection class. Also with Sinead Cusack, David Morrissey, Ethan Hawke, and John Heard.—T.R. (11/2/92) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Langres
A spicy cheese best eaten without bread, without crackers, without fruit, and most important, without the skin. The latter is too pungent for consumption.

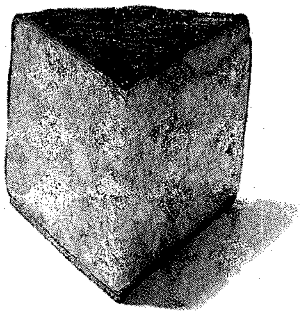


Dry Jack
When fresh, it's best for melting or grating. If it's sweating, cracking, and hard, it's best used as a doorstop.

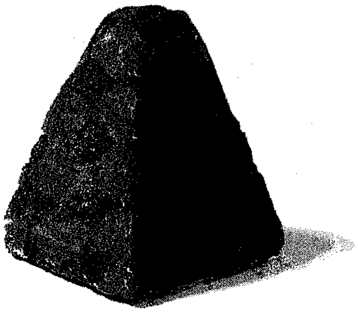


Fogeru
Creamy, ripened in bracken leaves. Taste by pressing to palate with tongue. (Beginner's tip: Remove leaves first.)

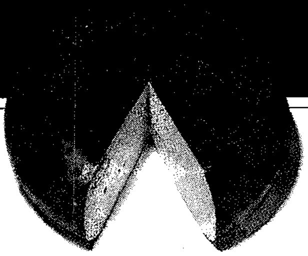
Become a cheese wiz.

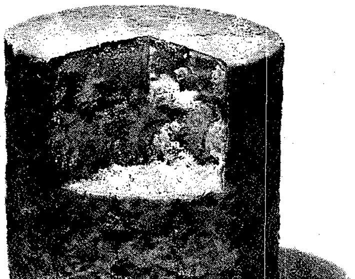


Sage Derby
Green-marbled, with lovely sage flavor. Like cheddar, it's good for sauces, soufflés, and (would you believe?) tacos.

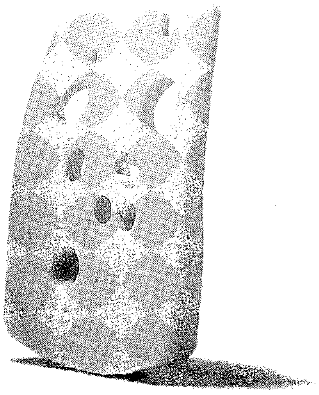


Valençay
Tender, smells of goat, with a deep blue mold skin, dusted with charcoal. A treat for the bold.



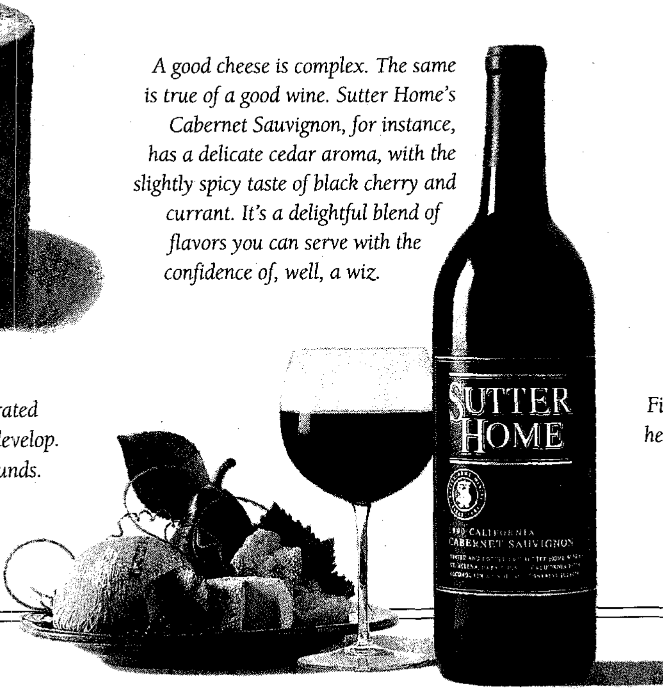


Stilton
King of the English Blues. Perforated with needles so veins of mold can develop. Tastes infinitely better than it sounds.



Emmentaler
Firm and fruity. Made in wheels as heavy as 220 lbs. Ideal for fondues, and bench presses.

A good cheese is complex. The same is true of a good wine. Sutter Home's Cabernet Sauvignon, for instance, has a delicate cedar aroma, with the slightly spicy taste of black cherry and currant. It's a delightful blend of flavors you can serve with the confidence of, well, a wiz.



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

FUTURE SHOCK

If clouds of unknowing appear to surround the future of the Princess of Wales, at least one of her subjects might be able to part them. Mrs. Betty Palko, a fifty-five-year-old Irish clairvoyant living in the West London suburb of Surbiton, has been Princess Diana's spiritual consultant since 1987—an association that was initiated by a discreet telephone call from an intermediary. ("I was recommended—I never advertise. My clients, you see, are higher- as well as lower-class people.") Through the good offices of her spirit guides, Mrs. Palko claims, she has been privy to her country's fate since that date and so, unlike the press, was informed of the royal separation well in advance.

It is in the reception room of her home, a semidetached Tudor-style house with red imitation-Victorian furniture, that the spirits usually move Betty Palko. The spirit of the late Earl Spencer, the Princess's father, who died last March, is a frequent visitor, and so is that of Lin Foo, described by Mrs. Palko as a long-deceased Chinese philosopher. But in cases where discretion is important, Mrs. Palko says, she is happy to operate from a hotel.

On several such occasions, it appears—and Mrs. Palko maintains a confidential silence about exactly where these meetings took place—Earl Spencer manifested himself in his daughter's presence. The Princess was unable to see or hear him, but became convinced that he was indeed present when, through Mrs. Palko, he referred to family matters that the medium presumably could not have known. "He gave me a message of love and understanding for her," the clairvoyant explains, "and apologized for leaving at a time when she needed him."

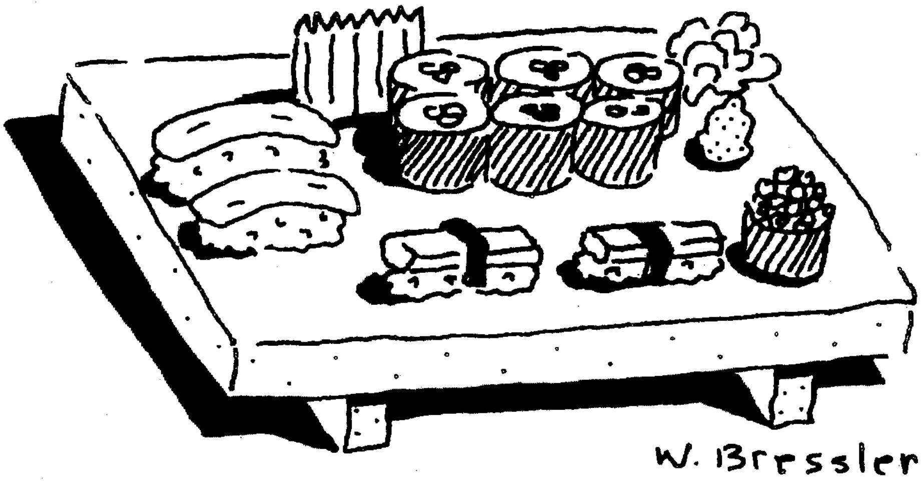
More recently, Earl Spencer appeared to Mrs. Palko while she was at prayer, and informed her that his daughter would change the face of the monarchy. "I see her as Queen," he told her. And although there will be no divorce, Mrs. Palko reports, "both Lin Foo and the late Earl believe that the Princess will have a new suitor in the New Year and that she will be very, very happy."

There have been no meetings for several weeks, however. The clairvoyant has left Surbiton for a world cruise aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2—the last of the great trans-Atlantic passenger liners in service, which happens to have the same name as the woman who, if Earl Spencer's ghost is wrong, could be the last of the Queens of England. Mrs. Palko has appointed an agent to handle her affairs.

ROYAL TRUMP

The announcement that the Prince and the Princess of Wales are to separate has demonstrated again the difficulties for the British of having no written constitution—just one that relies on precedent and the views of elderly peers of the realm appearing on television. Take, for example, the claim, made in Prime Minister John Major's statement to the House of Commons about the separation, that the split has no constitutional implications at all. He went as far as to declare, to general disbelief, that there is absolutely no reason that Princess Diana should not still become Queen if Prince Charles succeeds to the throne.

There might be practical difficulties in Diana's becoming Queen, though. The mechanics of a coronation traditionally require the King and the Queen to kneel side by side on cushions before the altar. Given the *froideur* thought to exist between the couple (the Palace's claims of an "amicable" split are not taken seriously), the ceremony might be an uneasy one. From now on, the couple will live in separate palaces, with separate courts—she in Kensington Palace and he with his grandmother in Clarence House. Might they, then, perhaps be crowned before separate altars—one



WAYNE BRESSLER

kneeling in Westminster Abbey and one in St. Paul's Cathedral?

If Charles were to divorce and remarry before becoming King, Britain would face the prospect of two Princesses of Wales, with the more recent to become Queen in Diana's place. It seems doubtful whether either the Church of England or the British public, which has largely taken Diana's side in the split, would live easily with this.

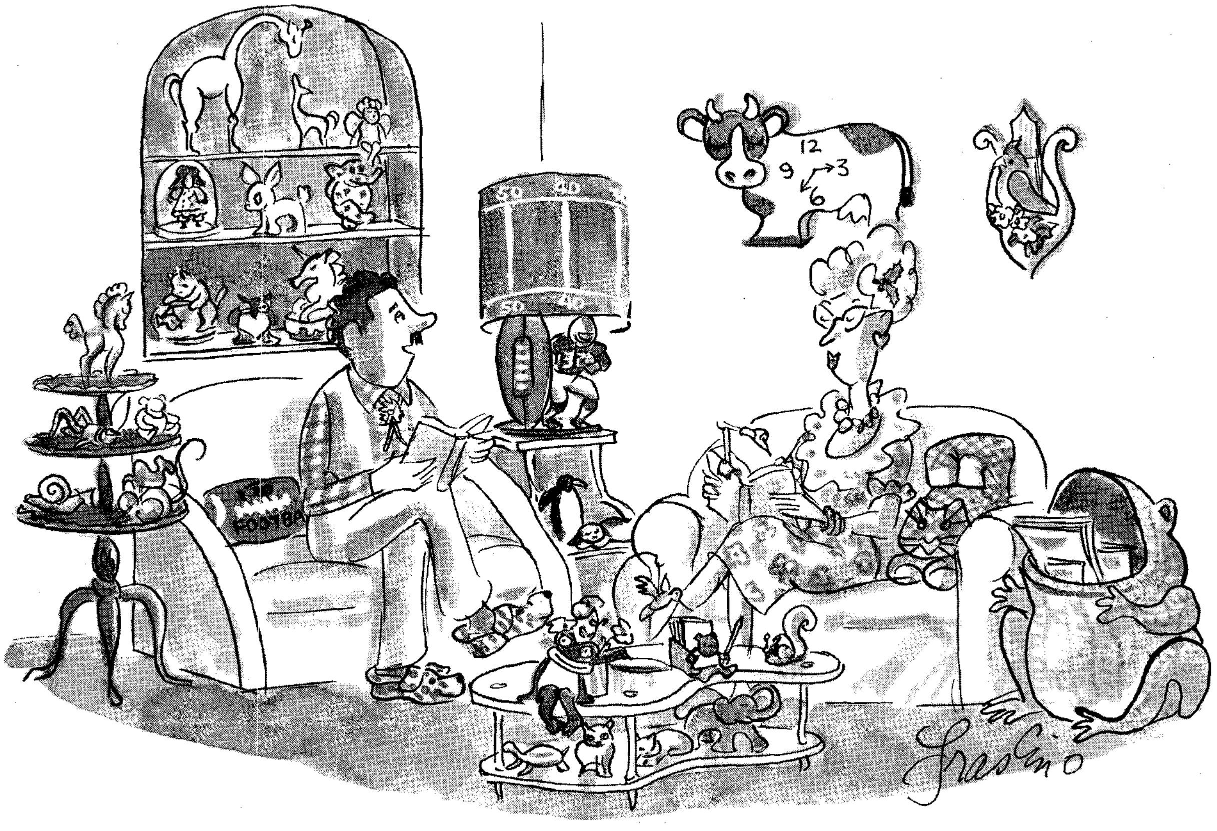
Logically, therefore, the Royal Family must hope, at best, that Queen Elizabeth II (the one original family member who still receives straight rave reviews) will reign to a great age or, at worst, that Charles and Diana never divorce and neither ever embarks upon a new relationship likely to result in progeny or scandal. A key phrase in the Prime Minister's statement appeals for "a degree of privacy" for the couple, and is clearly to be read as a plea that, now that the separation is official, any new consort to whom either partner might discreetly turn should not be the subject of press innuendo and speculation.

This, however, is almost certainly a futile request. It is worth noting that the most damaging intrusion into the life of the Duchess of York—when newspaper pictures were published of the Duchess topless and with her toe in the mouth of her Texan business adviser, John Bryan—occurred after her separation from Prince Andrew was officially announced. By normal social conventions, she was free to have her toe sucked by whomever she wanted. But both the British and the French press thought differently.

The most important unanswered question concerning the recent events is to what extent the Princess of Wales herself collaborated on Andrew Morton's global best-seller "Diana: Her True Story." It can be plausibly argued that Morton's book was the catalyst for almost all the catastrophes that have affected the British Royal Family in 1992. "Diana: Her True Story," in suggesting that the Princess of Wales was a suicidal bulimic, driven to illness by her husband's aloofness and his involvement with his old flame, Camilla Parker-Bowles, vastly expanded the range of what could be published about the Royal Family. Previously, Royal reporting had been rather tame, because reverence was assumed to be what the public wanted. Morton's book, though, established both a precedent for royal scandal and an appetite for it.

So Morton can be seen as a Cromwell of biographers, seriously rocking the monarchy. Why, then, would the Princess of Wales have assisted him? It can now be seen that the book was instrumental in helping her perform the remarkable feat of separating from her husband without losing the trappings of royalty. In contrast to her sister-in-law the Duchess of York, who was banished from the Royal Family when her marriage ended, Diana is to remain a fully paid-up member of it. The family can have agreed to this only because public support and sympathy for Diana are such that they dare not lose her. And she owes this support and sympathy in large measure to Mr. Morton's book.

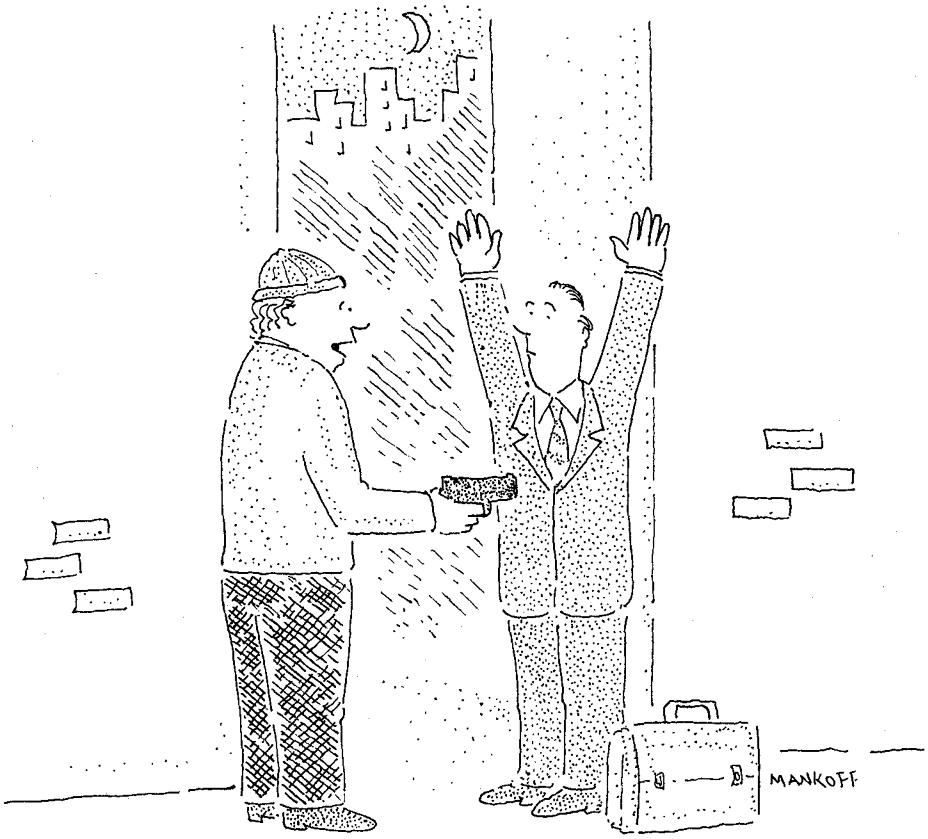
What, then, is the evidence that Diana engineered or directed Morton's biography of her? Traditionally, royal narratives relied on a scaffold of unattributable quotes to "a friend" or "a Royal insider." Morton instead attributed his stories to named friends of the Princess, including her brother, Charles Althorp (now Earl Spencer), James Gilbey (widely believed to be the male on the "Squidgy" tape), and Carolyn Bartholomew. Whether or not Diana was aware of what they were doing, she might have



"Sweetheart, perhaps we shouldn't exchange gifts this year."

distanced herself from the biography, and the Palace urged her to do so. But in fact the Princess ostentatiously visited and hugged Carolyn Bartholomew with the cameras present.

Many now believe that Diana—the Madonna of the monarchy, always carefully aware of her profile—has pulled off one of the great media coups in history, which has enabled her to get out of her marriage while remaining within the Royal Family.



"Look, I know I have a problem, and I'm going to use the money to enter a robbery clinic for evaluation."

• •

SACRED AND PROFANE

DON IMUS, the man who saved Bill Clinton's bacon in last April's New York primary, has now gone into the business of saving souls, with what he calls the Tri-State Jeep/Eagle Prayer of the Week. "Imus in the Morning," which is broadcast every weekday on the local sports radio station WFAN, is an eclectic show. The I-man, as Mr. Imus describes himself, juxtaposes serious political commentary, by people like Jeff Greenfield, of ABC News, and Anna Quindlen, of the *Times*, with astonishingly juvenile skits and gags—endless jokes about fat people and reflections on the private life of the woman who gives the traffic report. His gluttonous self-promotion, his on-air deconstruction of his press clippings (including, in advance, this one), and also, now and then, some truly funny bits have made the show catch fire. "Imus in the Morning" draws about a million two hundred thousand listeners per week.

Mr. Imus devoted much of the spring to ridiculing the candidacy of the man he called Bubba Clinton. But when Clinton appeared on the program, shortly before the New York primary, he completely won Mr. Imus over with his sparkle and charm. " 'Bubba' is just Southern for 'mensch,' " Mr. Clinton explained, and his poll numbers jumped. Other political-office seekers have taken the hint. Both Mayor Dinkins and Rudolph Giuliani, one of his expected challengers in 1993, have made repeated bids for Mr. Imus's support, and he is delighted by his new importance. "You know," he says, "I'm a very powerful and influential person."

But Mr. Imus appears to want more than political influence, for he has suddenly introduced religion into his show. The idea came to him last year at a fund-raising dinner on Long Island that opened with a raucous joint invocation by Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman. "I thought they were a riot and wanted to put them on the air," Mr. Imus says. Monsignor Hartman, who runs a religious cable station, and Rabbi Gellman, who heads a Jewish congregation in Melville, Long Island, began their double act five years ago, after they met during a television show about religious tolerance. The clergymen, who are not paid for appearing on the program, say they are unperturbed by the fact that the slot is sponsored by a car company—Jeep/Eagle. "Our main sponsor remains God," Rabbi Gellman says.

There have been difficulties, though. To the distress of both men, one of their first joint prayers followed an especially vulgar skit about the Thanksgiving feast. As a result, Mr. Imus agreed that the prayer would in the future occupy a "window of purity" in his program. "I've promised them a sort of filth-free zone," he explains, "but we don't really intend to abide by it." The prayer is usually introduced by some banter between the host and his two guests. One recent morning, Mr. Imus started by asking, "Is it safe for me to believe in everything as a hedge against, you know, winding up burning forever, or do I have to pick one guy, like Jesus?"

"Well," Monsignor Hartman replied, "I basically believe that in life you've got to believe in goodness, truth, and humor."

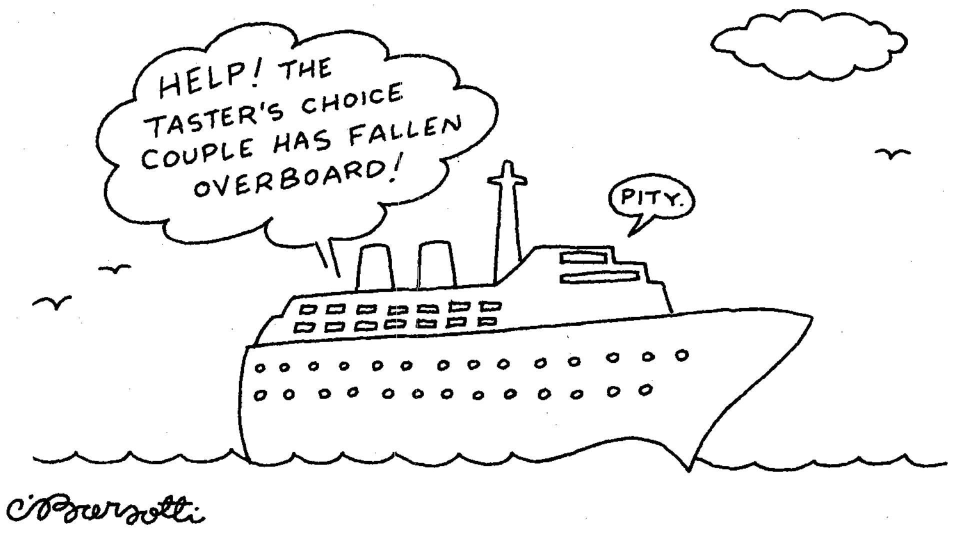
"Or two out of three," Rabbi Gellman put in. "Two out of three would be all right."

That issue settled, Mr. Imus asked the clergymen if there was ever discord between them. "You'd think there would be some tension there, particularly during, like, Easter," he said.

"I hide a lot," Rabbi Gellman said.

Monsignor Hartman then said they wanted to pray for Dennis Byrd, the New York Jet lineman who was paralyzed as the result of a recent accident on the field, and Rabbi Gellman said, "Just as Crown Heights and Bosnia and Somalia show us the dark side of the world, the Dennis Byrd incident shows us the dark side of sports."

Monsignor Hartman began, "We


HELP! THE TASTER'S CHOICE COUPLE HAS FALLEN OVERBOARD!
PITY.
CBarsotti

pray especially for Dennis and his family, and for all people in sports, that the entertainment side of it may not be the only side, but the humanity might come forward, and that God might send His healing, like a dew down from Heaven, upon not only Dennis but others who have been injured playing football. God protect these young men and forgive us for our games."

"Amen."

"Thank you both very much," Mr. Imus said.

"Now," Rabbi Gellman told him, "you can do the hump-the-turkey routine."

CHARM KILLS

It's not fair, but that's the way it is: Mayor David Dinkins doesn't get enough credit for being charming. While there may not be an actual taboo or an unwritten law against noticing that the Mayor is a charming person, it is feared in some quarters that to come right out and praise him for it might not be in his best interests. After all, the last time we had a charming Mayor was when John Lindsay glided from the Silk Stocking District into Gracie Mansion, and at that point the city had barely recovered from the charm of Mayor Gentleman Jimmy Walker. There are few occupations in which charm is a drawback. Rock star, Mayor of New York—that's about it.

The other night, Mayor Dinkins went to a party, at the Century Association, for the fifth anniversary of the pink weekly newspaper the New York *Observer*. The party was, more specifically, in honor of Susan Morrison, the *Observer's* editor, and Joe Conason, its executive editor. A party like this always reflects whatever feeling the guests have for whomever the party is honoring, and on this occasion much charm was cast, even over Robert Abrams, by Miss Morrison's radiant sincerity of manner and the investigative sparkle in Mr. Conason's eye. But it remains to be seen whether they will ever possess the fully matured *je ne sais quoi* with which the party was graced by Mayor Dinkins. There are constraints on describing the Mayor with a single word, for it might be a word linking him to undesirable predecessors. In two words, then, he has a magisterial modesty. (A slight internal contradiction is one of the hallmarks of charm.)

At a certain point in the evening, the Mayor was, without fanfare, simply there, in evening clothes with a softly ruffled shirtfront, standing quietly in a semicircle of guests and listening to Arthur Carter, the *Observer's* publisher, finish making a speech. Mr. Carter, who has dark hair and sharp features, resembles Rudolph Giuliani, but Mayor Dinkins was too gracious to say anything about that when he delivered his own remarks. Instead, he said, "There are so many distinguished people here tonight in politics and the arts that if I named you all, the *Observer* would be six years old by the time I finished." (When the most distinguished guest feels free to toss off wild exaggerations, a party is truly charmed.) The Mayor made some other jokes, after which he said "Only joking" and "Seriously." Almost no other speaker could get away with these rhetorical devices.

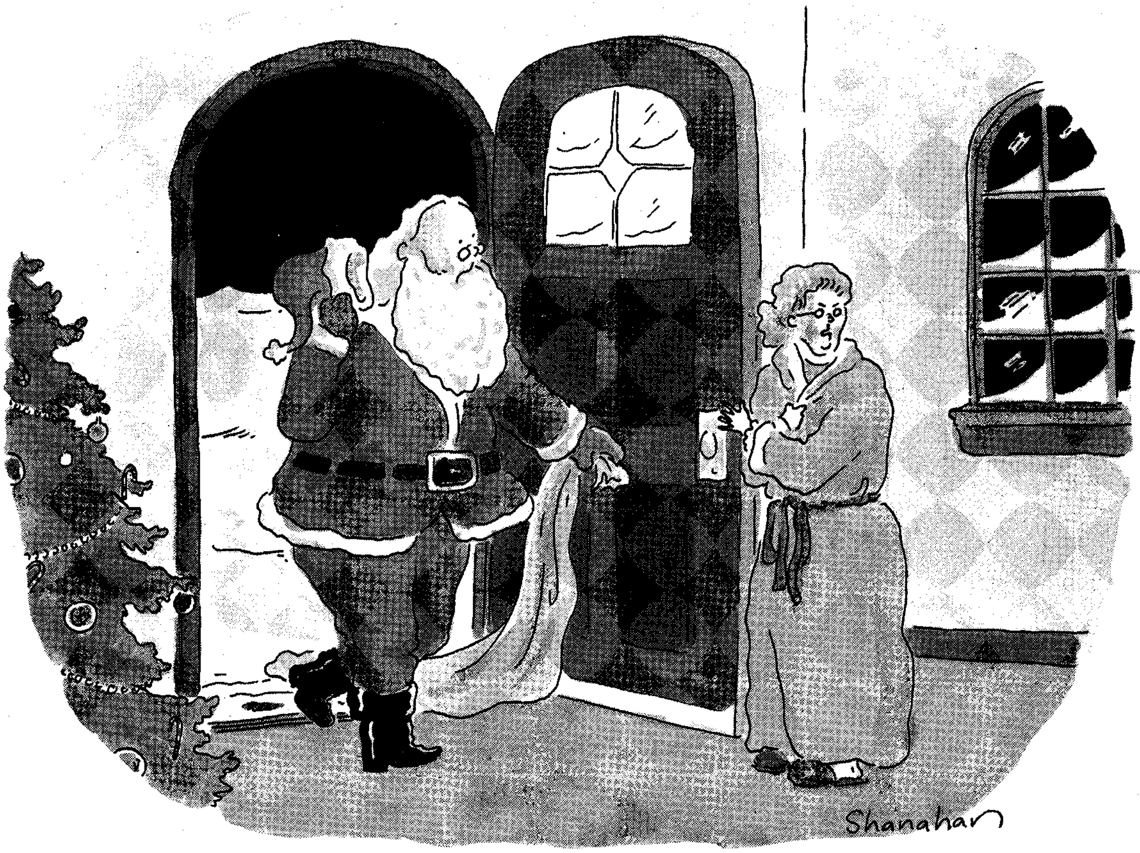
In the course of congratulating Miss Morrison for her talents as an editor, the Mayor mentioned *Spy* and said he wondered if he would soon find himself in the pages of the *Observer* " 'separated at birth' with Robert Goulet." It isn't clear what the Mayor—or his speechwriter, Maria Laurino—had in mind there (charm being two per cent mystery), but the baffling reference prompted speculation about what movie star the Mayor looks like. As he concluded with a heartfelt exhortation to the press—"Our society depends on your noble profession to discern the signs of the times, to make sense of them, and to place them in their context . . . especially at a time when the printed word is being bypassed for the big picture"—it became clear whom Mayor Dinkins looks like: Joseph Cotten as the elderly, idealistic newspaper editor Jedidiah Leland in "Citizen Kane." Remember Jedidiah in the solarium, in a white tennis visor? The fluffy white mustache against dark skin. The watery, translucent pale eyes. Talking about the first Mrs. Kane: "I went to dancin' school with Emily. I was very graceful."

MOONSTRUCK

Suzy Chippindale appears to have decided that the moon needs a public-relations officer. "What people forget about the moon," she says, "is that it's always out there doing its thing, whether or not you're seeing it or thinking about it." What kind of thing is it doing, then, when we're not seeing or thinking about it? Not a lot, it turns out. But last Wednesday afternoon it was at least to undergo an eclipse, which is a rare event as moon events go, and a couple of dozen people, including some journalists, had assembled outside the Hayden Planetarium, waiting in line to look at it through a telescope.

Ms. Chippindale is an astronomer on the staff of the planetarium, but on Wednesday she was acting more like a publicist at a movie première. "Tonight, the moon will be no more than a ghost of a shadow," she said. And so it proved to be, once the moon had disappeared into the shadow of the planet Earth.

As an ABC television camera recorded the scene, Ms. Chippindale looked very content. She knew she had got her client a spot on the evening news. ♦



"You smell like a chimney."

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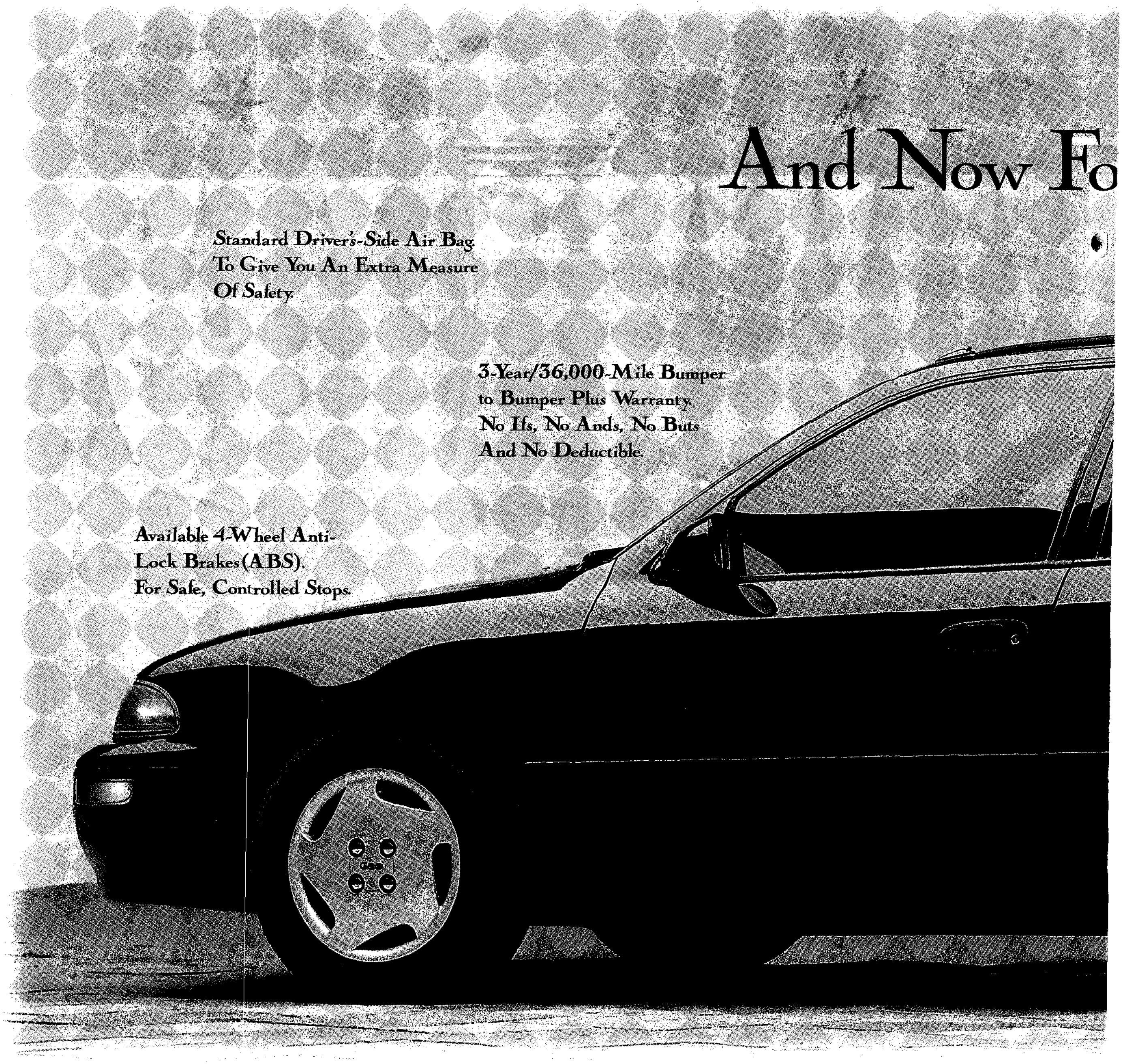
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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

WAITING FOR THE APOCALYPSE IN CROWN HEIGHTS

by David Remnick

TIM BOWER

A RAINY Wednesday in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, and the streets had been quiet for hours—just the ordinary shuffle of commerce on Kingston Avenue, parents pushing strollers along President Street. Then, suddenly, in the early afternoon, hundreds of Lubavitcher Hasidim came running down the sidewalks, their black coats billowing. The Lubavitchers all hoped that they had not missed the chance to see Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the ninety-year-old man they are confident is the Moshiach—the Messiah of this fallen world. In the December gloom, a huge banner, conceived somewhere between the Kingdom of Heaven and Madison Avenue, snapped in the wind, as if blaring out the call to redemption: "Moshiach Is Coming! Be a Part of It!"

Since suffering a stroke last March, Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, has been able to communicate with his people through only the slightest of gestures—a wave, a weary tilt of his head, an arched brow. The Rebbe's aides, a small group of rabbinic elders, are charged with interpreting his gnomic signals, including one that says he is feeling well enough to appear in public. Once this decision has been made, word spreads almost immediately through the fifty-square-block area in Crown Heights that has been since 1940 the seat of the Lubavitcher sect of Hasidic Judaism. The followers' urge to see the Rebbe is nearly impossible to exaggerate. Many of the Lubavitcher men wear beepers, and the instant they hear the tone, or feel the slight vibration, they are off. They put down their work, relay the signal to a few friends, and come running to the Lubavitcher headquarters, at 770 Eastern Parkway.

On the afternoon of December 2nd, I ran with them into the main synagogue of the brick mansion known to the Lubavitchers simply as 770. The room was already packed tight, but more people kept cramming in through the doors. If a square foot of open space appeared, someone would park himself there without signalling. Every so often, you caught an elbow in the ribs, and in the moment of recoil another space would appear, and then another worshipper. It was getting hard to breathe. Like whaling scouts on a schooner's mast, a few boys had climbed pillars to free themselves from the crush, and to get a better view. As the service began, the congregation started to murmur and swell with the sound and motion of prayer. The men kept stealing quick glances at the stage in the front of the room. In a separate section, walled off by tinted Plexiglas, there was a large group of women, and they shot the same eager glances. The stage was concealed by a beige curtain. Everyone knew that the Rebbe was back there praying.

"Have you ever seen the Rebbe?" a young rabbinical student, Shlomo Uminer, asked me. "You are in for the experience of a lifetime." Uminer is twenty-two years old and has lived in Crown Heights nearly all his life. Like everyone else I came to know in the Lubavitcher community, he is gripped by a sense of messianic imminence. He is absolutely convinced that he will live to see a redemption of peace, prosperity, and study. No other Jews—not even other Hasidic sects—have such an acute feeling of apocalypse; in fact, it can be argued that the last time any part of the Jewish world experienced such messianic fervor was in the mid-seventeenth century, when it endured the disaster of "the false Messiah," Sabbatai Sevi. Tens of thousands of Jews, from England to Yemen, were so sure that Sabbatai Sevi, a rabbi from Smyrna, was the Messiah, and Nathan of Gaza his prophet, that they packed clothes for the final triumphant journey to Jerusalem. When Sabbatai Sevi embraced Islam to avoid execution at the hands of the Turks, the Jews were traumatized. Ever since, as the great historian Gershom Scholem wrote, the messianic impulse in Jewish theology and practice has been "neutralized"; Jews, including most Hasidim, pray for the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem but understand such yearning in terms of a distant, even an unimaginable, future. The Lubavitchers are unique in their serene confidence that redemption not only is coming but is at hand.

"We are told that in every generation there is a candidate for the Moshiach," Uminer said. "He must descend from the lineage of David, he must be a great leader—a *tzaddik*, a righteous man. The Rebbe surely fits that description." Before the stroke made Schneerson mute, he told his people that the signs of redemption were everywhere: the defeat of Iraq and the safety of Israel throughout the Gulf War; the fall of Communism; the "ingathering" of Jews from Russia, Ukraine, and Ethiopia to Israel. Even the violence and racial tension in Crown Heights is now said to be, somehow, a harbinger of the Messiah. In *The Imminent Redemption*, a Lubavitcher newsletter, the editor, Rabbi Isser Z. Weisberg, writes, "The miracles and world-shaking events of the past three years, and those specifically affecting the Jewish people, leave us little room for doubt that we are at the threshold of an awesome transformation. Our hearts shiver with excitement. After close to two thousand years of bitter exile and countless tears, years of persecutions, expulsions, pogroms, and of the horror of horrors—the Holocaust—we are about to witness the ultimate retribution."

After half an hour of prayer, the afternoon service came to an end, and the congregation fell silent. Every pair of eyes was fixed on the curtain at the front of the room. There was the sound of a cord being yanked, and an instant later the curtain flew back, revealing an old man with a long white beard. The Rebbe sat stiffly in a chair, his head bobbing gently. In his slight smile there was something both kindly and imperial, and I thought of how many people had described him as a combination of teacher, parent, and heavenly connection, the embodiment of holiness. Behind the Rebbe stood three of his aides, rabbis who help run the Lubavitcher network, which extends to Jerusalem, Moscow, Melbourne, and hundreds of cities and towns in between. I turned to look into the faces of the men behind me and saw the collective face of awe. Nearly every Lubavitcher in Crown Heights had seen the Rebbe dozens, even hundreds, of times, and had heard him speak for hours at get-togethers known as *farbrengen*. And yet they all seemed transformed, overcome once more with pleasure and spirit. Seconds after the curtain opened, the singing began: "*Yekhi adonainu morainu ve-rabbainu,/Melech ha-moshiach le-alom va'ed!*" ("Long live our master, our teacher, and our rabbi,/ King, Messiah, forever and ever!")

The first line is a classic Hasidic tribute to a spiritual leader. The Satmars, the Bobovors, and other Hasidic sects often sing it to their own rebbes. But, joined, as it was that day, with the second line, it formed a song that explicitly conflates the identity of the Lubavitcher Rebbe with the Messiah. "This is unheard of among other Jews—really incredible," a critic of the sect, Allan Nadler, told me. Nadler is a rabbi and the acting director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, in Manhattan. In fact, no one at 770 remembers the lines being sung together until about eighteen months ago.

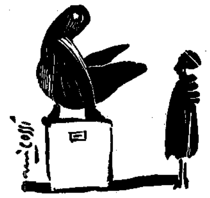
At first, the singing was relatively soft, but then, as the Rebbe began to make small, irregular nodding motions, up and down, side to side, he sent the crowd into a pandemonium. "It means he hears us! It's his way of singing with us!" one of the young men next to me exclaimed. The floor rumbled as the volume of the singing increased. Then the Rebbe, as if he sensed the hysteria, made a barely distinguishable gesture with his left hand, and one of his aides closed the curtain.

Even before the singing had died out, another dramatic aspect of contemporary Lubavitcher existence was revealed—that of racial politics in New York City. A young man in the front of the synagogue climbed on a chair and announced that everyone should quickly get on the subway and head for the Brooklyn Criminal Court, where "one of our own," a young rabbi named Moshe Katzman, was about to be arraigned for assaulting a homeless black man named Ralph Nimmons. The district attorney had accused Katzman of beating Nimmons in a courtyard behind 770. Nimmons claimed that he had been punched and kicked by Katzman, among others, as a crowd screamed at him "Black nigger!" and "Black motherfucker!" Katzman's lawyer said that his client had not even been at the scene, that the only reason anyone at all had struck Nimmons was that a group of Hasidim had caught him trespassing and attempting to burglarize the building, and that he had had a burglar's tools with him. When Nimmons resisted a citizen's arrest, the defense claimed, the Hasidim had "restrained him."

As many as twenty thousand Lubavitcher Hasidim live in Crown Heights, and since August of 1991 they have been living a dual existence, shaped on one hand by their sense of messianic imminence and on the other by the very earthly forms of fear, anger, politics, and tabloid sensationalism. The Lubavitchers are both evangelical spirits and a staple of the evening news, a curiosity of Jewish history and a critical element of what is likely to be the most divisive issue in next year's New York mayoral race. Perhaps only Isaac Bashevis Singer, with his taste for both the sacred and the profane, could have done them justice.

The Lubavitchers are a survivor sect. Hasidim who lived in Poland were almost completely destroyed in the Holocaust, but the Lubavitchers were relatively fortunate in having been subjects first of the Russian czars and then of

Soviet rule. The current Lubavitcher Rebbe's father-in-law and predecessor, Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, arrived in Brooklyn in 1940 and settled his people in Crown Heights, then a middle-class neighborhood of Irish, Italians, Jews, and blacks. After the war, white ethnics began to leave neighborhoods like Crown Heights for the suburbs, while blacks—especially immigrants from the West Indies—began to move in. Some Hasidim, such as the Bobovor sect, moved to other parts of Brooklyn, and others headed for the rural towns of New Square and Monsey, in Rockland County. Non-Orthodox Jews, some of them professionals who lived on the elegant blocks known as Doctors' Row, on President Street, left for Westchester County or Long Island. By the mid-nineteen-sixties, the rate of white flight in Crown Heights had increased dramatically, largely because of real-estate speculators' use of blockbusting techniques.



The Lubavitchers were faced with an obvious dilemma, and for a while they, too, seemed poised to leave. Frightened by a rising crime rate, they built a new educational center not in Crown Heights but several miles away, on Ocean Parkway. Some of the Lubavitchers did move, but the majority waited for a signal from their leader. Menachem Schneerson, who had become Rebbe in 1950, after his father-in-law died, finally made his feelings known during a Passover *farbrengen* in 1969.

"In recent times, a plague has spread among our brethren—the wholesale migration from Jewish neighborhoods," the Rebbe said. "One result of this phenomenon is the sale of houses in these neighborhoods to non-Jewish people. Even synagogues and places of Torah study are sold." Citing Talmudic sources, the Rebbe said that it was prohibited for Jews to sell their houses to Gentiles when the sale would have negative consequences for the community. "Such stringent prohibitions of Torah law would apply if the sale of the house to a non-Jew caused damages to only one person," he declared. "How much more so does it apply when, as in our case, the damage is suffered by all neighborhood residents."

The Lubavitchers obeyed the Rebbe. According to literature passed out from their "mitzvah tanks" that cruise the streets of New York in search of converts, the Lubavitchers are confident that the decision to stay not only saved Crown Heights from the sort of ruin found in neighboring Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville but also provides a model of integration.

It cannot be said, however, that in the twenty-three years since the Rebbe's edict Crown Heights has been a landscape of racial harmony. In the nineteen-sixties, the Lubavitchers responded to the rising crime rate by setting up citizens' street patrols called the Maccabees, and black leaders protested that innocent people were being harassed by Jewish vigilantes. They said that the Lubavitchers—especially the Rebbe himself—were getting preferential treatment from the police and other city services, mainly because the community represented a critical bloc of votes. They were appalled to see the Rebbe given a police escort when he visited the cemetery, or to see a squad car parked in front of 770. Lubavitcher leaders, for their part, called on black leaders to do something about the upsurge in violent crimes in the area. They were angered by a number of attacks, including one in 1975, in which a fifty-four-year-old man named Israel Turner was murdered by a robber outside his house, on Empire Boulevard. During the funeral procession, one of the Lubavitcher rabbis demanded increased police protection. At the same time, some bystanders shouted "Heil Hitler!" and "Hitler was right!" Fights broke out, and if it had not been for police intervention there might have been a full-scale riot. A few days later, the Reverend Clarence Norman, Sr., the black minister of the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights, told the *Times*, "The two groups don't know each other well. The Jews think the blacks are all muggers and rapists. And the blacks see the Jews as white people, as symbols of oppression."

All that tension was merely a prologue to the narrative of resentment that has now become a part of life and mayoral politics in New York City. The recent trouble in Crown Heights began on the evening of August 19, 1991. A three-car procession carrying the Rebbe was returning to 770 after he had visited his wife's grave. At the intersection of President Street and Utica Avenue, the first two cars went through the light easily, but the third ran the light. The car, driven by Yosef Lifsh, swerved and jumped the curb, hitting two seven-year-old children—Gavin and Angela Cato, cousins who had arrived in New York from Guyana in 1990. Gavin was crushed to death, and Angela was badly injured. A crowd quickly gathered around Lifsh's car, and there were calls of "Kill the Jew!" Within minutes, a Hatzolah ambulance, run by Lubavitcher volunteers, and an ambulance from the city's Emergency Medical Services arrived at the scene. According to court testimony, a policewoman told the Jewish volunteers to take Lifsh and two other Hasidim, who had been attacked by the crowd, and get away immediately. The city ambulance, the policewoman told them, would deal with Gavin and Angela Cato.

The rumor spread, however, that the Jewish ambulance workers had deliberately ignored the Cato children. It was a rumor rooted in an old resentment—the perception of the city's giving the Hasidim preferential treatment—and it effectively transformed a tragic accident into an act of evil intent. That night, as people left a B. B. King concert nearby and heard the rumor, the calls of "Kill the Jew!" grew even more insistent on the streets of Crown Heights. Furious black protesters overturned cars, smashed windows, and chanted "Jew! Jew! Kill the Jew!" Finally, at around 11:30 P.M., a Jew was killed. A crowd of young black men walking down President Street spotted Yankel Rosenbaum, a twenty-nine-year-old Hasidic scholar from Australia. "There's a Jew!" came the shout. "Get the Jew!" They knocked him down, kicked him, beat him, and stabbed him. The police arrested a sixteen-year-old boy, Lemrick Nelson, Jr., who they said had fled from the scene of the stabbing with a bloody knife in his pocket. On the knife handle was written one word in red nail polish: "Killer." The police took Nelson over to Rosenbaum, who had been lifted onto the hood of a Lincoln Continental, where he lay bleeding. Rosenbaum spat blood at Nelson and cried out, "Why did you do this to me? . . . I never did anything to you." Rosenbaum died at Kings County Hospital three hours later.

The rioting continued until August 22nd—at first, with only minimal inter-

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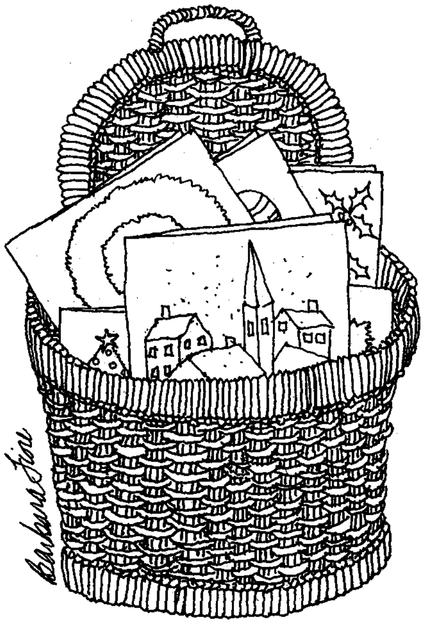
vention by the police. The rioters figured out which houses to vandalize by looking for ones with a mezuzah on the doorpost. Black leaders from outside Crown Heights, including the Reverend Al Sharpton, Sonny Carson, Alton Maddox, Jr., and C. Vernon Mason, organized demonstrations, at which they harped on the theme of preferential treatment for the Jews. Sharpton called for the arrest of Lifsh and decried the Lubavitchers for running "an apartheid ambulance service." Demonstrators burned a makeshift Israeli flag and chanted "Heil Hitler!" Blacks and Jews exchanged volleys of epithets, bottles, and stones. Mayor David Dinkins' attempts to end the crisis were late and, initially, ineffectual, and the Police Department, which was going through a major leadership crisis at the time, seemed confused and hesitant. It was only on the fourth night of rioting that the Mayor and the police put an end to the conflict.

On October 29th of this year, a jury in State Supreme Court in Brooklyn acquitted Lemrick Nelson of all charges. Nelson's lawyer, Arthur Lewis, Jr., accused the police of conspiring to frame Nelson and said that, on the witness stand, they had looked like "a bunch of cops that can't lie straight." Members of the jury, which consisted of six blacks, four Hispanics, and two whites, said that they had acquitted Nelson not for racial reasons but because of inconsistencies in the police testimony and other points of evidence. The next day, as many Hasidim protested the decision, some members of the jury joined Lewis at a restaurant for a celebration dinner. Later, Lewis told the *City Sun*, a weekly black newspaper, that if Nelson had not been acquitted "there would have been destruction and death like this city had never seen."

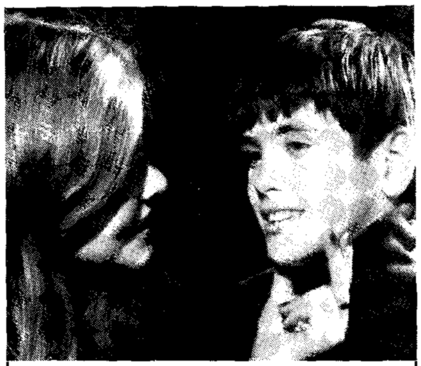
IN the Lubavitcher community, the Nelson verdict intensified the sense of danger and injury. It is now easy to find leaflets in Crown Heights with a photograph of David Dinkins under the heading "Wanted for Murder." With the same sureness that the Lubavitchers display in declaring the coming of the Messiah, they told me that they were now subject to incidents of anti-Semitism on a par with those in Germany in the nineteen-thirties or those of the pogroms in Poland and the Russian empire in centuries past. The events of August, 1991, chilling in themselves, are regularly compared to the Nazis' Kristallnacht, in 1938. No rhetoric, no symbol, seems beyond use. At the arraignment of Moshe Katzman, many of the Hasidim wore yellow paper stars pinned to their coats—a symbol meant to evoke the Stars of David that Jews were forced to wear in the time of Hitler. "We feel like the Jews of Berlin in Nazi times," a young Hasid named Solomon Neubort said as we watched the arraignment. "We feel that at any moment we can be killed and we will not be protected by the authorities." Last month, Norman Rosenbaum, Yankel's older brother, speaking at Yeshiva University, told the audience that the August, 1991, "pogrom" was "the most repugnant and disgusting example of anti-Semitism ever to confront us," because it happened "notwithstanding the pledges of our parents and grandparents and six million martyrs." Another speaker at Yeshiva, the lawyer Franklyn Snitow, accused the city government of ignoring "Jewish pain," because Jews "are not politically correct."

To dismiss the spectre of anti-Semitism, of course, would be dangerously naïve. Before heading out to Crown Heights one morning, I stopped at a sidewalk bookstand on Sixth Avenue in midtown Manhattan, and there, among many books on African culture and Malcolm X, were two of the classics of Jew-hating: the Russian forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and "The International Jew," by Henry Ford. Sometimes, to listen to the black-run radio station WLIB is to be thrust into a torrent of anti-Jewish voices—mainly from callers enraged by what they see as a Jewish hold on money, the press, and political privilege.



But the fury and the rhetoric of the Lubavitcher community are tragically overblown. Who really believes that David Dinkins is a "Jew hater"? Is New York in 1992 really worse than Nazi Germany? Rarely has political discourse become so debased, and yet this language of rage is tremendously influential. Jews in New York have conflicting feelings about the Lubavitchers. Their seeming authenticity, their proselytizing, their self-confident faith, and their Europeanness evoke in many Jews a complicated blend of guilt, loathing, pride, and nostalgia. Much of the Lubavitchers' budget comes from donations made by Jews outside the community. The Lubavitcher leaders often portray themselves as not only spiritual but also municipal exemplars. Just as they will not allow Dinkins to preach to them about "a gorgeous mosaic," they will permit no lectures about integration from assimilated Jews living on the Upper East Side, in Riverdale or Westchester, or on Long Island. "We actually live with black people, so we are the first targets," Rabbi Yosef Friedman said. "We live in the trenches." When I said it was unfortunate that the demands of a kosher diet and separate schooling usually keep the Lubavitchers insulated from the rest of the community, Rabbi Shalom Hecht raised his hand in kindly protest. He said that, while "we are admittedly a chauvinistic people," he himself used to have black neighbors come over to his house on Friday nights or Saturdays "to turn on an air-conditioner or something."

The chauvinism in Lubavitcher thought may be more problematic than the sect's leaders are willing to admit. A Lubavitcher scholar, Roman A. Foxbrunner, points out that the founder of Lubavitcher Hasidism, Shneur Zalman (1747-1813), greatly exaggerated the common notion of the "chosenness" of the Jewish people. In a recent book, Foxbrunner writes that Shneur Zalman believed that "Gentile souls" were "of a completely different and inferior order. . . . They are totally evil, with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. . . . Jews were the pinnacle of creation and served the Creator." You will not hear such lan-



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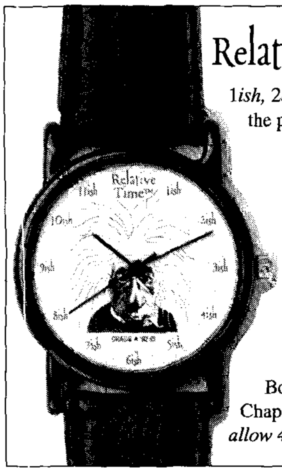

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guage in Crown Heights, but the denunciations of Dinkins as a liar and an anti-Semite, and even a murderer, suggest a fury that goes far beyond logic or political debate.

In the last mayoral election, Jews—Lubavitchers included—were strong backers of Dinkins. In the next election, Lubavitcher leaders told me privately, they will get behind either Rudolph Giuliani or Andrew Stein, or anyone who seems to have the best chance of defeating Dinkins. How the rest of the Jews of New York will vote, how they balance their traditional liberalism against the accusations now in the air, could decide the election. And what then? What happens to the dream of a gorgeous mosaic if New York politics becomes the politics of black versus Jew?

I TOOK the subway from Manhattan out to Crown Heights again. As the train headed east through Flatbush, I was one of only two people left in the car who were not black or Hasidic; the other was a Korean, who was selling illuminated yo-yos, a dollar apiece. A homeless black man I had seen before noticed several Hasidic boys and shouted, "Christ will rise again!" The boys all laughed as they got off at Kingston Avenue.

The Mayor gave a televised speech that afternoon, calling for racial harmony. Whatever his shortcomings as the administrator of Babel, Dinkins seemed at that moment as decent and sincere as a politician could be. No Lubavitcher I talked with, either then or later, agreed. They did not seem to care that the Mayor was in the near-impossible position of balancing one community's rage against another's. Dinkins had betrayed them, they said. This was Berlin in the thirties, Poland in the time of the pogroms.

I talked with a charming young woman named Dena Gorkin, who is married and has three children, and whose house had been vandalized during the riot of August, 1991. "We felt violated," she said. "Even now, I can't feel safe. We live on Lefferts Avenue, and we call it East Beirut."

When I asked Mrs. Gorkin about the other obsession of the Hasidim of Crown Heights—the coming of the Messiah—her face relaxed, and she smiled, almost as if the Rebbe himself were there with us.

"For me, the Rebbe shows every sign of being the Moshiach," she said. "I've always said that I was 'the Rebbe's miracle'—or, at least, one of them. For a long time, my parents tried to have children, but they didn't get anywhere. They wrote to the Rebbe to ask for a blessing, and a year later my sister was born, and then me. Somewhere, deep down, one hundred per cent of this community feels that the Rebbe is the Moshiach. They might not admit it to you, an outsider, and not everyone will say it, because of a fear that saying it will drive people away. But we are all convinced of it."

I asked Mrs. Gorkin if she could ever conceive of a situation in which the Rebbe died and the Moshiach still had not come.

"No," she said. "That just cannot happen. It's impossible. I don't even think I could answer that question. You see, we all think there is a message in the fact that the Rebbe never had any children—a message that everything is going to be all right. God always provides a solution to a problem even before He creates the problem itself."

Later, I stopped by a Lubavitcher bookstore. Outside was a sign advertising an exhibition, "The Days of Moshiach," at a Lubavitcher yeshiva in Flatbush:

> Teachers and Children Will Be Able to See in a Visual Manner:
>
> - A walk down the dark tunnel of Galut
> - The lion lying down with the lamb
> - The resurrection of the dead

So many Lubavitchers had talked to me about the traumas that the community had endured: the violence of August, 1991; the Nelson verdict; the Katzman case. With the Rebbe ailing, I could not help asking myself what trauma lay ahead. Before I left Crown Heights, I met with a rabbi named Sheah Hecht, and I tried to raise the question.

The rabbi cut me off. "Think what you want," he said. "But what if it turns out that we're the ones who are right? We are ready for the Messiah. We are ready now." ◆

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[From the Los Angeles Times]

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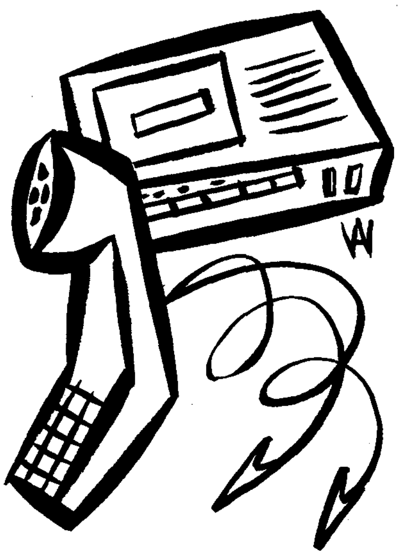
ANNALS OF SURVEILLANCE

TO CATCH A JUDGE: HOW THE F.B.I. TRACKED SOL WACHTLER

by Lucinda Franks

On the morning of Monday, September 21, 1992, in Newark, New Jersey, Special Agent Bill Fleming opened his briefcase and passed around packets of highly confidential evidence to a group of top federal officials in the office of the United States Attorney. The packets contained obscene letters, greeting cards, and joke cards, mailed by an unknown man in New Jersey to a woman named Joy Silverman, in New York. The first letter had arrived in April. Now there were ten. They began with blackmail demands and ended with talk of kidnapping her fourteen-year-old daughter. Mrs. Silverman did not know her predator, but one thing was clear: her predator knew her. He knew the private corners of her spacious Park Avenue apartment; he knew—and claimed to have photographed and tape-recorded—where, when, and exactly how she had made love to her current boyfriend, a New Jersey lawyer named David Samson. The writer threatened that the world would know these things, too, unless Silverman paid the price.

The original notes, most of them typed and then signed in an indecipherable scribble that looked something like "Olive," had been sealed in forensic pouches and sent to the Washington headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for fingerprinting, handwriting analysis, and comparison with known typewritten samples. The feds reading the copies, inured though they were to the extremes of human perversion, registered unmistakable signs of discomfort: a few chairs shifted, a tie was loosened, breath was expelled through compressed lips.



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The previous Thursday, Silverman, who was a major Bush fund-raiser, had gone to the F.B.I. director, William Sessions, who was a major Reagan appointee. On Friday, Bill Fleming and another Newark agent, Carrie Brzezinski, had interviewed Silverman, who is forty-five and is separated from her husband, Jeffrey. The two agents had then collected the letters and put together a "universe of suspects"—five or six people who might have a grudge against Silverman.

One agent now said, "Who are we dealing with, the Marquis de Sade?" He held up a greeting card that had been sent to Silverman's daughter, dangling it between his fingers as though it were a dirty tissue. On the outside was an image of a cuddly kitten; inside, a wrapped condom. It read, "You can use this to do it with your boyfriend. I'm going to send you some pictures of your mother doing it with her boyfriend."

The writer claimed to know the comings and goings of Silverman and her daughter. Some of his information was skewed. Although Silverman and Samson tended to see each other at her home, obscene phone calls were placed to her at his apartment. Then came a letter that said, "I'm surprised your stuff is already in there." The writer claimed to have bugged Samson's apartment, "but don't worry, my bugs are smaller than a gnat's ass."

There was a pattern to the correspondence of escalating sexual torment, designed to heighten the suspense in both mother and daughter. Silverman had also received letters from an anonymous woman in New Jersey. The woman wrote that she had hired an investigator

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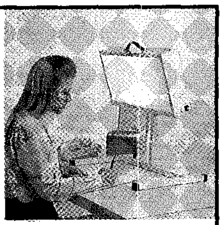
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from Texas, named David Purdy, to spy on David Samson, whose client was fighting her in a business dispute over a Linden, New Jersey, incinerator. Purdy, the woman wrote, had obtained photographs and tapes of Silverman and Samson together, which he now intended to use to blackmail Silverman. The woman said she was so sorry about all this that she had decided to warn Silverman.

The letters from the woman had arrived in June and July. Then, in August, the perpetrator got closer: a man dressed in Texan garb came to Samson's building and left a message that David Purdy had stopped by; a few weeks later, a similarly dressed man gave Silverman's doorman a letter warning that he would be back by autumn. This is the story—reconstructed from a series of interviews with members of federal law enforcement—of how the F.B.I. prepared for his return.

"THE scheme is stunningly elaborate," Garey Chin, the F.B.I. case supervisor, said as the agents pored over the letters with New Jersey's United States Attorney, Michael Chertoff. "It is the work either of a sophisticated extortion ring or of one very Byzantine individual." If it was the latter, the weaver of this web had put himself at a second, or even a third, remove: an imaginary New Jersey woman was writing to warn Silverman about an imaginary investigator who, in the course of pursuing an imaginary investigation, had launched some sort of surreal blackmail scheme. The attention to detail impressed the feds: the calls and the postmarks were from three different states and a half-dozen cities; Purdy emerged, by means of his cowboy hat, as a distinctive personality; David Samson actually had been involved in a legal dispute over an incinerator in Linden. It was clear that the extortionist was unusually and supremely confident, capable of carrying out an intricately layered plan.

If the letters had entered Joy Silverman's life like a thunderbolt, to the lawmen at that meeting on the twenty-first of September they were well within the realm of the routine. American society has spawned schools of extortionists. The United States mails were swimming with them, and the standard net would be cast to catch this one. To tell the truth, the U.S. Attorney himself was a bit distracted that day. All summer, he had been preparing to try Arthur Seale, the kidnapper of the Exxon executive Sidney Reso, and now Seale had surprised prosecutors by entering a guilty plea. Seale would probably spend the rest of his life in jail, but if it were up to Chertoff he would spend it in a box—a three-by-six-foot box, like the one in which Seale made Reso spend his last days. The authorities were utterly baffled by Reso's disappearance until Seale made the ransom demand, and by then Reso, who was by all accounts a particularly decent fellow, was dead of heart failure. Chertoff imagined Reso's death often. Even as he looked at one of the letters from the anonymous New Jersey woman, he was imagining Reso lying there wounded, in that box, without food or light or fresh air, without anything but his own terror.

And then Chertoff did a double take: the New Jersey woman was warning Silverman that Purdy was involved with Arthur Seale in an extortion ring and that Silverman could be their next target. Chertoff's chest tightened. During the summer, his office had received an anonymous letter claiming that Seale was blackmailing David Samson, but when agents questioned Seale's wife she knew nothing about it. Nevertheless, the extortion correspondence was similar—Seale's had been intricate and long-drawn-out, just like this. Seale, who was, like the so-called Purdy, a security expert, had boasted of his surveillance ability, describing with eerie accuracy the habits and home life of one Exxon employee. Chertoff turned to the last letter Silverman had received from the extortionist, on September 12th: it demanded that she obtain a telephone number at which he could reach her and place it in a classified newspaper ad under the heading "Lost Texas Bulldog." Arthur Seale had demanded that Exxon put a contact number in a newspaper ad under the heading "Florida Cattle Ranch."

Chertoff dropped the letter on the table. "This has Seale written all over it! Maybe he's running the operation from jail. Maybe he never told his wife about it."

SPURRED by Chertoff's heightened sense of urgency, the Newark F.B.I. placed the ad in the *Times* of October 1st and hard-wired a new telephone line into Joy Silverman's apartment, attaching a

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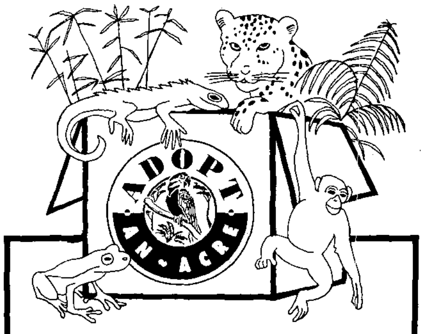

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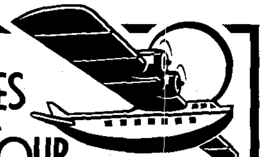

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recording device and obtaining a court order that enabled the New York Telephone Company to "trap and trace" any calls that came through. Special Agents Brzezinski and Fleming took up positions in Silverman's apartment and waited with her for the phone to ring.

Meanwhile, other New Jersey F.B.I. agents questioned David Samson's estranged wife, Elaine. She denied knowledge of the harassment campaign against Silverman, but subsequently got in touch with the F.B.I. twice, complaining that she, too, was receiving threatening phone calls, from a man who wanted to sell her photographs of her husband and Silverman. The agents on the case decided against interviewing the other potential suspects Silverman had named. "This guy is manipulating everybody's mind," one agent argued. "You can be sure that if we start questioning people he'll know about it. If we wait him out, the rest of the suspects will fall off the scope, and he'll be left there naked."

The agent was right. On October 3rd, Joy Silverman received the first call on the contact phone. The caller hung up, but the telephone company's trap-and-trace technology has become very sophisticated, and the surveillance computers identified the number instantly. So did Joy Silverman. She knew the number well. It belonged to the car phone of a longtime lover she had broken off with a year earlier. It belonged to a man who had been her confidant for years but who, she came to feel, had increasingly tried to control her, both emotionally and financially, as trustee of the three million dollars she had inherited from her stepfather. It belonged to the sixty-two-year-old Chief Judge of the State of New York, Sol Wachtler.

The agents saw that Silverman was stunned. She told them that Wachtler had fallen into a rage when she began seeing Samson, but she could not really believe that he would do this to her. Her stepfather, the real-estate developer Alvin Wolosoff, had trusted Wachtler, and so had she. When her marriage to Jeffrey Silverman fell apart, she had turned to him, even though the affair was rich with incestuous dangers: Wachtler's wife, Joan Wolosoff, was her step-cousin, and he regularly introduced Joy as his "ward."

The following day, October 4th, another call came through on the contact phone. The voice was muffled and distorted. In a week, the man said, Silverman would be hearing from David Purdy; she would have to pay twenty thousand dollars for the incriminating photos and tapes. The F.B.I. traced the call to a pay telephone just a few miles from Sol Wachtler's home, in Manhasset, Long Island. Two particularly menacing calls, on October 5th and 7th, came from the same area.

Brzezinski and Fleming were impressed by Silverman's fortitude: she followed their instructions to remain cool when she heard the caller's voice and to avoid an emotional outburst or any other response that might cause communications to cease. But after each call she would begin to shake. With a terrifying clarity, she was now able to piece together oddities that she had heard and seen in Wachtler's company. She told the agents that Wachtler, who loved electronic gadgets, had demonstrated for her a voice-disguiser he had picked up somewhere. She recalled that he had been fascinated by the Reso kidnapping and, particularly, by the complexity of Seale's ransom notes. Wachtler had been in awe of Arthur Seale—he had made a point of telling her so, she said. Later, friends had told her that Wachtler seemed more curious than concerned when he heard about the threatening notes she was receiving—grilling them about her reaction, wanting to know if she was rattled. She now warned the agents that Wachtler was "a very clever fellow."

It was the job of the agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to gather evidence, but it was the job of the United States Attorney to decide what to do with it. On the morning of October 8th, five days after the first call to Silverman, Michael Chertoff walked into his office and removed his coat, exposing a pair of rather eccentric suspenders, adorned with fingers pointing heavenward. As he was enjoying a Tootsie Pop, a frequent indulgence of his, his deputy Victor Ashrafi strode in with one of the agents.

"We have a real suspect in the Silverman case," Ashrafi said.

"Who?" Chertoff asked.

"You're not going to believe it."

"Who?"

"Sol Wachtler, Chief Judge of New York."

"Very funny, Victor. *Who*?"

Ashrafi laid out the accumulating evidence. Chertoff called Jere Doyle, at the time the acting agent in charge of the New Jersey F.B.I. "Jere, if you'd traced that call back to Rehnquist it couldn't be more ridiculous," he said. "What makes you think Wachtler isn't being set up?"

"My gut," Jere replied. "That's a possibility, of course, but I think it's Wachtler."

"Let's give him the benefit of the doubt," Chertoff said. "Maybe it's one of his staff, a member of his family—it could be his bodyguard, for all we know. Jere, let's not assume *anything*."

"We got another call," Ashrafi told Chertoff the next day. "He's turning up the pressure. He got really nasty about the kid. Demanded the twenty grand again. The call was made from Harrah's hotel in Reno."

Chertoff took a deep breath. "Did you find out where Wachtler was at the time?"

Ashrafi nodded. "He was at a judicial conference. In Reno. At Harrah's."

For the next several days, Chertoff, who was used to prosecuting mafiosi, walked around in a state of shock. He would gaze up at a photograph on his wall of Justice William Brennan, for whom he had clerked, and shake his head; that Chief Judge Wachtler would write these letters was more than his imagination could conceive. Still operating on the assumption that Wachtler was being set up, he asked investigators to check on who had accompanied Wachtler to Reno. Privately, though, he now thought that the worst was probably true: the most powerful judge in the state was tormenting and shaking down a woman and her child. He was haunted by the fact that Sol Wachtler had, in a perverse way, been as obsessed by Arthur Seale as he was.

Chertoff and his deputies studied Wachtler's known character traits. Did they fit with those of Silverman's stalker? "Wachtler is said to be a very ambitious guy, who got to the top by assiduously and methodically cultivating those who could help him," Chertoff said. "He is said to be controlled, rational, practical, even conspiratorial. These are the qualities of the Silverman extortionist. He has calibrated this series of threats very carefully over a period of months, like a Grand Master moving pieces around a chessboard. He's turned the screws very slowly, each call and letter a little different, a little nastier, cranking things up and enjoying it, but delaying the final act."

The Reno call had particularly upset Silverman. The agents were there by her side, and she had tried to keep her voice calm, but she had asked the caller again and again if he was threatening to harm her daughter, and he had told her, "You're damn right I'm threatening. If you don't give me [the money], tell you what I'm going to do. The first thing I'm going to do is, [she] is going to spend Thanksgiving with me."

For the members of the U.S. Attorney's office in Newark, the days after the Reno call were the hardest. They argued about when they should move in on Wachtler. "We could charge him now, but the evidence is circumstantial," Ashrafi said. "We'd probably lose the case in court. But if we don't stop him he could get wise to us, we could blow it, and then you'd end up with a secret nut running the court system of New York."

"Right," said James Esposito, who had just arrived from Kansas City to head up the New Jersey F.B.I. "He is clearly a sociopath. He could lie low for a year and then begin it all over again. And this time maybe nobody could stop him."

"We could go to Wachtler privately," someone suggested. "Confront him with the evidence. Make him resign."

Chertoff looked up at the ceiling. "I can just see Wachtler now. The outrage. He'd say 'What are you talking about?' and kick us out of the office. He'd tell us to go find the guy who was framing him."

"Look," Esposito said. "We're all nervous about how this is going to play out. We just have to do the most careful, most intensive job we can. Because if we don't, if we screw up, gentlemen, we're dead."

They had to catch Wachtler in the act—on that, everyone agreed. But it wouldn't be easy. Protecting Wachtler much of the time was an armed bodyguard provided by the courts expressly to watch out for anyone who might be watching the judge. Esposito decided that his agents would carry out "loose

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surveillance"; they were to hang back and to remember that it was better to lose their target than to be spotted.

By the middle of October, New Jersey surveillance agents had crossed the river to spy on Wachtler. They followed him when he left the courthouse in Albany; they followed him on the weekends, when he went home to Long Island; they followed him into New York City, hoping that he'd head for a pay phone.

On October 21st, James Fox, a tall, distinguished figure who is the head of the New York F.B.I., was surveying the skyscrapers of Manhattan from his twenty-eighth-floor office in Foley Square when his deputy, William Gavin, walked in. Gavin was newly arrived from Miami and didn't know much about New York operations, but he had learned of some strange bursts of transmission from a bureau radio. "Apparently, Newark's over here," he told Fox. "They're doing surveillance all over the place. Are they allowed to do that on our territory?"

"Hell, no," Fox replied. "What's it about?"

"An extortion case, from what I can gather," Gavin told him. "A guy named Wachtler—Sol Wachtler. He's some kind of judge."

"Some kind of judge? He is *the* judge!" Fox exploded. "I *know* Sol Wachtler. Get your facts straight. He can't be the subject of the investigation. He's probably the victim."

The next morning, a dazed Fox was sitting with Jere Doyle in the Newark F.B.I. offices, hearing the details of the past month's investigation. Fox wasn't at all happy about Newark's having made off with a case that he felt should have been New York's. "It irritates me no end," he said. "He's our judge, whatever he's done and wherever he's done it. He belongs to us."

But the case would stay in Newark. Not only were most of the extortion letters mailed from New Jersey but some F.B.I. officials in Washington were concerned about the power of the old-boy network in New York.

Fox, however, insisted that Newark start paying New York some respect. The two bureaus would operate as a team to close in on the prey. The moment was near—everyone felt it. The question, as one agent put it, was "When we catch him at a pay phone making a call that is traced to Joy Silverman's contact number, what do we do?"

"Arrest him," a New York F.B.I. agent said.

"Is one call enough to nail down the case?" Doyle asked, worried.

"If this were a common criminal, yes. Sol Wachtler, no," Esposito said.

"I want more than one call," Chertoff said finally. "If he was caught making only one call, anything could go wrong. We could pick him up before he said anything incriminating. He could come up with fifty cockamamie stories: someone gave him the number, he was calling to wish her happy birthday. Get one clear call in the bag, and then we'll arrest him when we catch him making the second."

How were they to get one call in the bag?

Esposito said, "When we see him, we'll do the following: First, take the telephone. We'll have a recording of his voice over the line. We'll have a surveillance report. We'll have a photograph of him making the call. And we'll have his fingerprints on the phone."

A typed letter mailed to Silverman from San Antonio, Texas, in mid-October came as a peculiar relief. It appeared that what had until now constituted merely a criminal threat would finally become a criminal act. The extortionist named a place and time for the ransom drop. At exactly 10:30 A.M. on Saturday, November 7th, Silverman's doorman Ramón was to deposit twenty thousand dollars on a cellar stairway between Lexington Avenue and a hair salon on East Eighty-fourth Street, two blocks from her apartment.

For the next two weeks, Silverman's tormentor was silent. On October 27th, Sol Wachtler, attending a meeting of judges at the Harmonie Club on East Sixtieth Street in New York, excused himself to make a phone call before going into the dining room for dinner. The call was received at the contact phone in Silverman's apartment. The agents trailing Wachtler decided against barging into the venerable private club and dismantling the pay phone. The next day, however, they got another chance. The telephone company alerted the F.B.I. that a call placed to the contact phone had been trapped and traced to a pay phone in Roslyn, Long Island, and agents sped to it. They put on latex gloves, clipped the phone cord with wire cutters, and deposited the handset in a plastic evidence bag. It was sent to the Identification Division of the F.B.I.'s Washington headquarters, and there laser equipment lifted off every fingerprint, however faint, that had been left on the receiver. One of the prints matched Wachtler's.

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On the evening of November 3rd, Wachtler was followed to LaGuardia Airport by an F.B.I. agent disguised as a traveller, and at the airport Wachtler made a call to the contact phone, boarded a USAir flight to Kentucky, disembarked in Louisville, and called again. He told Silverman that he would drop off the incriminating materials at her apartment at 1 P.M. on November 7th. He moved up the time of the ransom delivery by fifteen minutes, to 10:15 A.M., and he threatened that if he was not paid he would "snatch your kid."

In the three days before November 7th, these things happened:

Agents Brzezinski and Fleming stayed with Silverman and her daughter around the clock. A bodyguard escorted the girl to and from school, and Silverman stayed close to home.

The F.B.I. surveyed the many nooks and crannies of East Eighty-fourth Street between Park and Lexington Avenues, from the fire escapes on the buildings to the alleyway that led from the cellar stairway designated as the drop site. Posting sites were decided on, and an arrest plan was drawn up.

On November 6th, Wachtler had dinner at an Albany club with members of the executive committee of the New York State Bar Association. He apologized to one lawyer, who was on crutches from an auto accident, for not calling him, and explained that he had been very busy and had had "a lot on my mind." He then gave a talk about the need for law enforcement to be tougher on criminals.

While Sol Wachtler was at dinner,

Michael Chertoff confidentially filed a criminal complaint charging him with conspiracy to commit extortion and with threatening to kidnap a child. This was a precautionary measure, so that, if necessary, the F.B.I. could get permission to enter Wachtler's home the next day to arrest him.

THE command post of the New York F.B.I. Operations and Command Center in downtown Manhattan looks not unlike the Starship Enterprise, of "Star Trek." On the rear wall of the room are three giant screens, on which neighborhood maps, live field surveillance, and graphs charting the progress of a manhunt can be projected. Law-enforcement officials, at stations in three semicircular tiers of desks, can watch—and direct—as criminals are caught in the act. In the highest tier, where one would imagine Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock to be, are three desks marked for the chief decision-makers: the police commissioner, the head of the New York F.B.I., and his deputy. The next tier is for the second level of brass, the desks bearing interchangeable nameplates such as "U.S. Attorney," "Secret Service," and "Chief S.O.B."—which, Jim Fox is quick to tell you, stands for Special Operations Branch. In the bottom tier, F.B.I. people talk through microphones to their counterparts in the field and perform such tasks as running the license-plate number of a car through a computer check to see if there is an F.B.I. file on the owner. The room is equipped with phone banks, TV monitors, cellular-phone capability, encrypted communications-control panels, walkie-talkies (as a backup should other communications systems fail), and special two-way FM radios that encode every word being transmitted. (The F.B.I. considers this piece of technology, which was developed by Motorola in 1984, to have brought law enforcement from the Stone Age into the Space Age, because if members of the press or the K.G.B. or the Mafia tune in to the radio's frequency, hoping to listen in on F.B.I. operations, the only sound they can hear is a *bzzzzzt.*)

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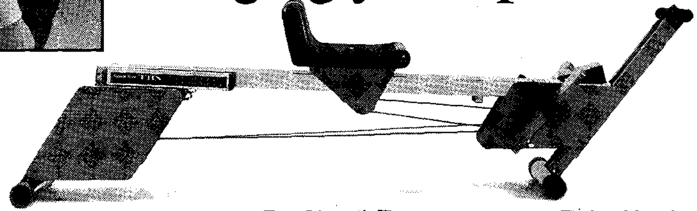

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used to track a judge, a fact not lost on anyone in the room. Ordinarily, covert cameras—hidden in cars, in trash cans, even on the tops of telephone poles—would have recorded the suspect's movements and flashed them on the big screens at the command center. But this morning the screens were blank, because the F.B.I. hadn't wanted to risk alerting Wachtler; after all, he was no stranger to the methods of law-enforcement surveillance.

Beginning at about seven-thirty on Saturday morning, so many high officials came through the command-post doors that it was immediately clear there would not be enough first-tier desks to go around. There was Chertoff; Manhattan's U.S. Attorney, Otto Obermaier; Esposito; Fox; and various deputies. No one was relaxed enough to sit down anyway, so they all crowded around Ronald Mahaffey, the New York F.B.I. coördinator for violent-crime matters. He was the quarterback, sitting at an elevated corner desk, receiving reports from the forty agents stationed between Albany and New York, and shouting out the most important facts as they came in. Someone had thought to bring in a bag of fresh bagels, and the people who ate them threw their used napkins into a container marked "NON-CONFIDENTIAL TRASH." The confidential trash went into another container, which would be taken down to designated shredding rooms by janitors who had been investigated for at least three months before being issued security clearances.

The conversation was filled with nervousness and bewilderment. "Jesus, how do you figure this?" one Assistant U.S. Attorney remarked. "Wachtler was a state hero. He must have flipped his lid."

"I feel sorry for him," Fox said. "I didn't even think this thing was going to come down today. I thought he was just trying to scare this woman."

A transmission came through from an agent near the Eighty-fourth Street drop site. "Hey, there's a cowboy out here in a disabled car! He's getting it towed."

There was a stunned silence. Then Fox said, "Is it David Purdy? Is there a *real* goddam David Purdy?" Agents were ordered to follow the man, and his license plates were traced. It turned out to be an odd coincidence—the man in Western garb was a tourist. A half hour later, another agent saw Wachtler leaving his Albany residence: "He's carrying a case. He's in his car, driving himself. He's heading south."

The room became a cacophony of agents' voices crackling over the speakers. Officials were conferring, pacing, eavesdropping on agents at the mikes talking to undercover agents in the field. Most of these were around the East Eighty-fourth Street drop site—the man in jeans loitering near European Hair Designers, the one looking out the window of a pizzeria, and the two sitting in a car parked near the corner. Other agents were stationed along the route between Joy Silverman's apartment and the drop site.

A few minutes after 10 A.M., Silverman's doorman, Ramón, taking comfort from the presence of the agents, travelled the two blocks to the cellar stairway and deposited a manila envelope containing the ransom money.

Mahaffey announced that Wachtler had pulled over to a rest stop in Ramapo, New York. The room suddenly fell quiet again.

"He's sitting in his car. He's looking pensive, knitting his brows. Now he's getting out of the car. He's at a pay phone. He's dialling a number. A lot of cars have pulled up and are using the same bank of phones. We'll check all their license plates."

The voice of Don Clark, a New York agent, who was watching the manila envelope on the stairway, came over a radio: "The receptionist at the hair salon is coming out. She's picking up the envelope! She's gone back into the shop. She's talking on the phone. She hung up."

"Keep your eye on that package, Don!" Mahaffey yelled.

"Is she an accomplice?" someone asked. "Or is she a dupe?"

"Wachtler's pacing up and down next to his car," Mahaffey said. "He's touching his forehead, he's almost talking to himself, he looks like he's trying to make up his mind about something. He's going back to the phone. He's making a call. The hair-salon receptionist is answering her phone. She's disappearing into the back of the shop with the envelope."

"Tell an agent to go in there! Don't lose that package!" Esposito shouted.

"What the hell is happening?" Fox wondered aloud. "Are these hair people in on it? Tell the agent to stay with them. We don't want them tipping Wachtler off."

In a few minutes, Clark was back on the radio with the information that the receptionist was not in on it. The caller had done his research: he had claimed to be a regular customer and had proved it by knowing how to pronounce her Turkish name. He apparently knew the small salon had a loyal and regular clientele, who often asked the owner to receive or hold on to packages for them. He had promised her a big tip if she picked up the envelope, and had then called back to ask her to open it. That's when she had gone to the back of the shop—to consult the owner. He told her to refuse. The caller, who said that his name was Mr. Samson and that his car had broken down, told the receptionist that a "Miss Heather" would be by to pick up the envelope.

Wachtler continued down the Thruway, and at 11:15 A.M. he stopped at an A. & P. near his daughter's home, in Scarsdale. There he tore up some paper, put it in a trash can, and got back into his car.

"He's throwing something away?" Chertoff said excitedly. Several people yelled at once, "Pick it up! Pick it up!"

An agent retrieved the scraps and tried to reassemble them. "It looks like a threat," he said—a contingency letter, in case the money hadn't been delivered. " 'You cunt, you didn't take me seriously,' " the agent read.

At 11:30 A.M., Wachtler arrived at the house of his daughter, Lauren, and about forty-five minutes later he emerged with her. She drove in her car to the highway, with him following, and then he drove on toward New York alone. Fox wondered if Wachtler had intended to have his daughter be "Miss Heather." "Maybe he tried to persuade her to pick up the envelope," Fox said. "Or maybe he was stopping there to try to establish some kind of alibi."

At about 1 P.M., Mahaffey relayed the news that Wachtler had arrived in Manhattan and was parking at Second Avenue and Eighty-eighth Street. "He's getting out of his car. He's putting on a cowboy hat. Is it really a cowboy hat? You're not sure? Yes, it is a cowboy hat. And an overcoat. He's getting back in his car. He's putting on a string tie. He's getting out again. He's taking an envelope out of the car. He's hailed a cab. He's talking to the cabbie. He's given him the envelope and ten dollars. Wachtler's going back to his car. The cab is leaving."

"Get someone to follow that taxi!" Fox yelled.

"So there is no David Purdy," Esposito said, to no one in particular. "So Sol Wachtler is David Purdy."

Agents' updates were pouring in over all the radios at once. The cab was picking up a fare. The driver had delivered the envelope to Joy Silverman's building.

Wachtler, back in his car, had taken off his cowboy hat and was circling the block, stopping his car, then starting it up again.

People in the command post were also all talking at once. "Is he looking for a bag lady or some dupe to pick up the ransom envelope?" "Is Lauren going to appear?" "Does he have other messages to deliver?" "I think we should pull down the cabbie." "No, let's wait and see what the cabbie does." "But he's let out the fare and we don't know if they're going to be witnesses or defendants, for Christ's sake."

"Ron, tell him to stop the cab," Fox ordered Mahaffey. "Look, we don't know who else is an accomplice. The cabbie could be in on it; so could the fare; so could the daughter. For all we know, so could the whole damn Court of Appeals."

Mahaffey announced that Wachtler had stopped at a gas station. There he threw two more envelopes in the trash, and then he headed out on the F.D.R. Drive to the Triborough Bridge and onto the Long Island Expressway. In a moment, agents reported that the envelopes contained more contingency notes.

"So he's not going to pick up the money!" an agent exclaimed. Fox, Esposito, Chertoff, Obermaier, and two assistants adjourned to a small conference room off the command post and began to discuss what to do next. "You know, we started the day thinking that this was a judge who was sick," an Assistant U.S. Attorney from New York said,

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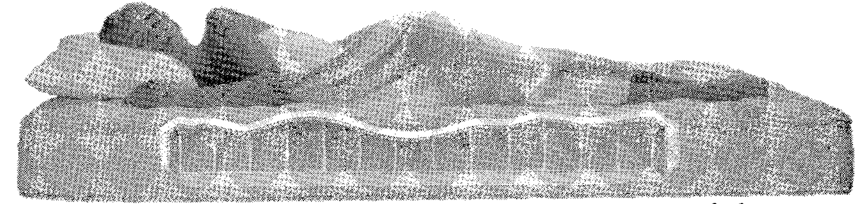

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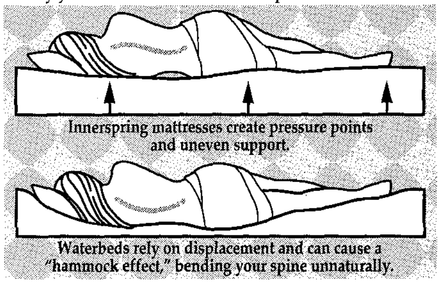

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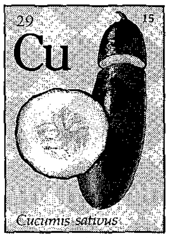

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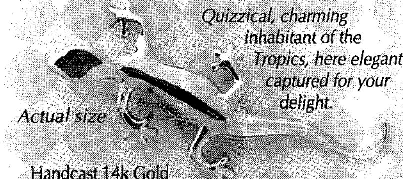

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"and now we've seen a judge who has behaved like a common criminal."

Mahaffey rushed into the room. "This is the strongest case I've seen in twenty-four years," he said. "He's alone in a car on the expressway. We have control, and I think we ought to arrest him."

Fox nodded. Not even in the most complicated espionage cases had so much evidence been collected, he said, and he added that the agents had done a spectacular job. "We all feel bad about Wachtler, but, in spite of that, I feel like Patton after the tank battle: 'God help me, I love it.' "

Mahaffey was almost pleading now: "He's getting closer. Once he gets into his house in Manhasset, it will be really difficult. He could have a weapon in there. We then have to worry about him harming an agent or harming himself." But Chertoff, ever cautious, was not yet ready to give the order. "I want to hear the contents of that last note. If he says goodbye, this is the end of it, then maybe we should wait until Monday to arrest."

Esposito rushed to a phone, switched on a speaker box, and dialled Silverman's apartment. "Read the letter, Bill, and hurry," he told Fleming. Fleming opened the envelope that the cab driver had delivered. "There's a pornographic picture inside," he said. "Quickly!" Fox yelled. Fleming raced through the two-page letter, which contained obscenities and graphic sexual descriptions. It closed with "The shitty twenty thousand dollars is just loose change to you. The next time it will be for two hundred thousand dollars."

Several of the officials listening flushed and looked down at their feet. Esposito took a breath and said, "This is the limit. Tomorrow he may come up to the daughter in disguise. He may hurt somebody."

Chertoff looked at his colleagues. "Unless anyone has any objections, let's take him down," he said. Everyone nodded. Fox gave the signal to Mahaffey. Mahaffey grabbed a microphone and, at exactly 1:49 P.M., instructed the two cars following Wachtler on the Long Island Expressway: "Effect the arrest."

In Wachtler's state-owned car, agents found evidence that might otherwise have disappeared: a black rectangular box, fitted with a cup, through which a caller could disguise his voice.

Although Wachtler had been caught unawares, he was composed as he entered F.B.I. headquarters to be fingerprinted and "mugged." He looked calmly at the assembled law-enforcement officials and shook hands all around.

Meanwhile, in Albany, agents entered Wachtler's chambers and seized his typewriter, which sat on a desk that had once belonged to New York's great and revered chief judge Benjamin Cardozo.

THIS is what has happened since Wachtler's arrest. There have been dozens of news stories depicting him as a man passionately obsessed, who functioned at the highest level publicly while privately suffering a severe breakdown. There have been numerous editorials criticizing the F.B.I. for dispatching eighty agents (there were actually six) to showily arrest a revered public servant who should have been taken quietly aside and reprimanded. There have been articles portraying Joy Silverman, who wept tears of relief when she thought her ordeal had ended, as less a victim than an aggressive temptress. A battery of medical and psychiatric tests have been given to Wachtler, and, reportedly, they have not turned up any significant abnormalities. Wachtler, who resigned from the court and is sequestered under house arrest, is reported to be very depressed. At the same time, he is said to have made something like fifty telephone calls to associates, during which he has tearfully apologized. With criminal charges pending against him, he remains—contrary to some reports—a trustee of Joy Silverman's inheritance and therefore is still capable of exerting control over her life.

Aides to U.S. Attorney Chertoff report that he is irate about the defense scenario he sees unfolding—one in which Wachtler's attorneys will seek to delay a trial, to persuade Joy Silverman to ask that the charges be dropped, and, eventually, to convince the authorities that the judge has been rehabilitated. One aide said that Chertoff had confided that he was determined "not to let this happen," and that he said, "I won't allow this case to slip away on the basis of murky claims of Wachtler's emotional troubles. This was not a crime of impulse. This was not a crime of passion. This was not just a terrible mistake." ♦

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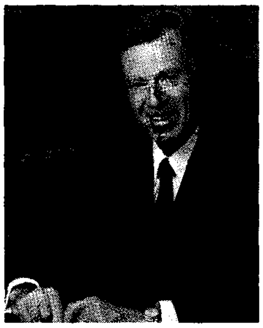
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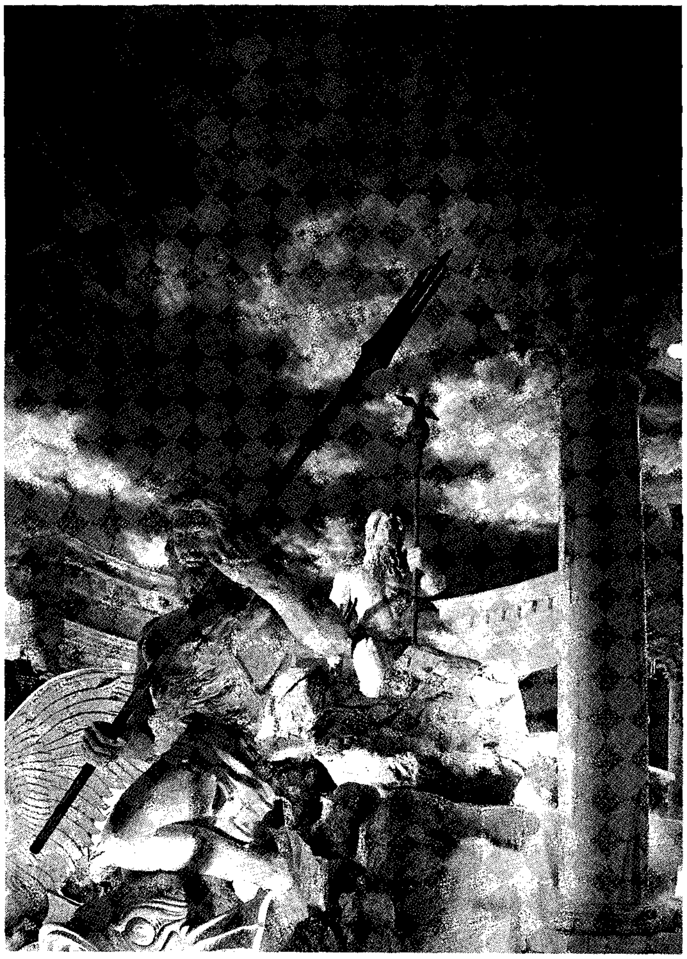

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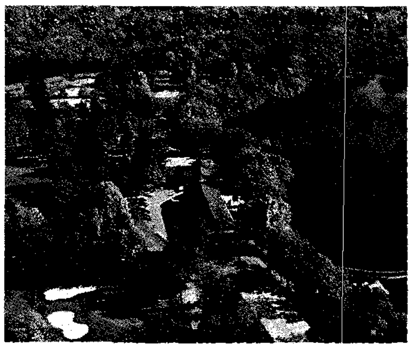

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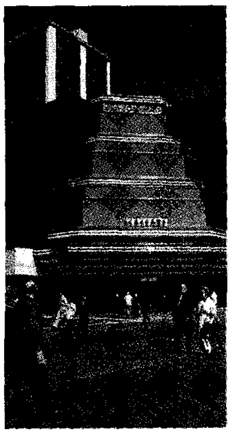

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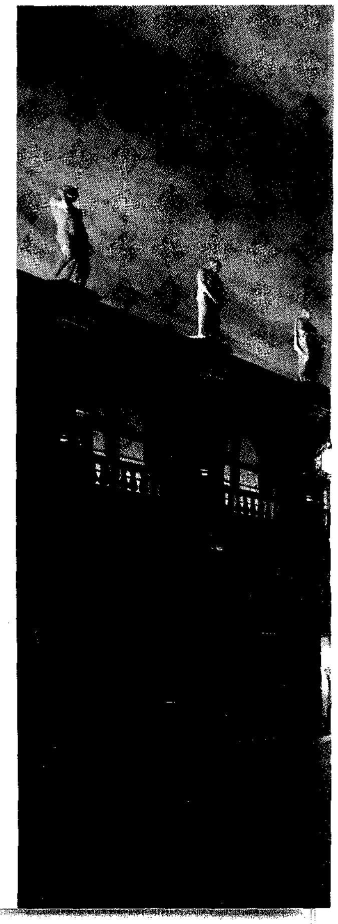

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

DEREK WALCOTT'S ODYSSEY

by Jervis Anderson

SINCE the autumn of 1985, the St. Lucian-born poet and playwright Derek Walcott had been hearing that he was a finalist for the Nobel Prize in Literature, but each year some other writer won. After so many years of disappointment, Walcott had almost ceased hoping that the honor would ever come to him. In 1990—the year that "Omeros," his tenth and most ambitious book of verse, appeared in the United States—he allowed himself to suspect that the rumors would be true at last. A widely acclaimed narrative epic, "Omeros" invests ordinary inhabitants of St. Lucia and neighboring parts of the West Indies with the Homeric spirit of characters in the Iliad and the Odyssey. One reviewer wrote, "If certain cardinals are said to be papable or 'Popable,' then Walcott surely is Nobelable."

Roger Straus, Walcott's New York publisher, shared the feeling—confidently so, since his firm, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, had had six Nobel Prize winners since 1980. Straus flew to London early that October, as he does every autumn. He likes to be in England during the season of Nobel announcements, to get a jump on the news from Stockholm. As he stepped into his London hotel suite, the phone was ringing. A Swedish journalist was calling to ask, "Where will you be at 1 P.M. tomorrow?"

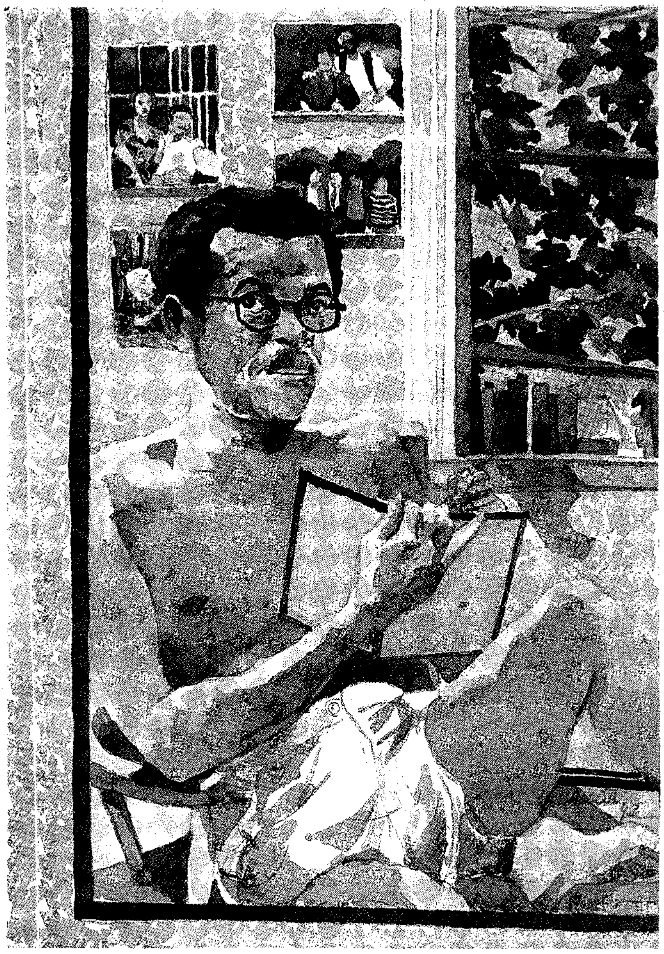
Straus replied that he would probably be sitting by the phone.

"Good, because I shall want to interview you."

"What about?" Straus asked.

"The Nobel Prize will be announced tomorrow, and two of your writers—Derek Walcott and Nadine Gordimer—are the finalists."

"I was ecstatic," Straus said later. "And when the reporter called the next day I was indeed sitting by the phone. 'What do you have to say about the winner?' he asked. 'Who *is* the winner?' I wanted to know. 'Octavio Paz,' he said. I hung up on the son of a bitch. He was no wiser to the secrets of the Swedish



A self-portrait of the Nobel laureate, who says of his epic, "Omeros," "I was writing it for the island people from whom I come. In a sense, I saw it as a long thank-you note."

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Academy than the rest of us were."

After the 1990 Nobel awards, Walcott resolved to stop tormenting himself with thoughts about the prize. The annual rumor was not only "irritating and embarrassing" but also "a stupid game," he said in a recent interview. After all, he reasoned, there were so many writers who deserved the prize, some far more than he did. His own favorites included Seamus Heaney, Carlos Fuentes, and Yehuda Amichai. "Besides, I reminded myself, look at some of the great writers who died without winning the Nobel Prize—Joyce, Auden, Graham Greene, Jorge Luis Borges. Why should my chances be any better than theirs?" Of course, it was hard to avoid thinking how useful the prize money could be. Walcott, who is sixty-two, has three grown children, and they were not yet wholly unneedful of his financial support. He also dreamed of building a house in St. Lucia and of establishing scholarships for promising young writers in the Caribbean. "Nevertheless, it got to the point where I learned to put the whole business out of my mind," he said.

Walcott lives part of the time in Trinidad and part of the time in a small condominium apartment in Brookline, Massachusetts, that is a six-minute walk from Boston University, where he teaches poetry and playwriting. On October 8th of this year, in his Brookline apartment, he rose at about six o'clock and began listening to the morning news. The 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature was to be announced that day, and, despite his resolution, he was curious to know who had won. There was nothing on television about the prize, and he switched the set off. Just then, the telephone rang. It was the Swedish Academy, in Stockholm, calling with the news that he was this year's winner. He listened to a reading of the citation: for his "poetic œuvre of great luminosity, sustained by historical vision" and "multicultural commitment," for work demonstrating that in Walcott "West Indian culture has found its great poet." The prize, he was informed, came with a cash award of a million two hundred thousand dollars. Dazed by the news ("The money was unreal"), Walcott stuttered his thanks into the phone and added something about "the great honor."

Still in his pajamas, Walcott rushed to answer the doorbell. Reporters and photographers from the wire services were arriving. They agreed to wait outside while he showered and changed. Walcott is a tall man of medium build, with brown skin, alert and kindly hazel eyes, a graying mustache, and curly black hair. He soon reappeared at the door, this time wearing a beige tweed jacket, a green V-neck sweater, a striped shirt, and off-white slacks, and invited the journalists to join him for breakfast at a nearby coffee shop. Formidably serious in most of his writing, he is jocular in person—unfailingly swift at repartee, and wickedly fond of cracking jokes about friends and about himself as well. Simultaneously awed and amused by the media attention he was attracting, he levelled a deflating comic gaze at his instant celebrity—especially when, as he recalled later, he "saw cameramen dashing behind the counter to record this rich Nobel Prize winner taking his breakfast at Dunkin' Donuts."

That evening, exhausted after a full day of interviews, Walcott found himself wishing that he were back in St. Lucia, among the people whose lives had enriched so much of his work. He imagined how jubilant the St. Lucians might be over the distinction his career had brought to their little island. "I thought how nice it would be to be there, watching the people as they drank and celebrated," he said to an interviewer.

A week later, the *Crusader*, a weekly published in Castries, St. Lucia (it calls itself "The People's Paper"), devoted an entire issue of forty pages to the native son it called "the world's greatest living poet." The publisher, George Odlum, "in a spontaneous burst of pure joy," composed this tribute:

> This is the place to emphasize the deep commitment of Derek Walcott to everything St. Lucian. St. Lucia's magical landscape; St. Lucia's curved bays; St. Lucia's seascape in all its moods; St. Lucia's flora; St. Lucia's fauna; St. Lucia's folk idiom; St. Lucia's music; St. Lucia's damsels; St. Lucia's fishermen; St. Lucia's banjo players; St. Lucia's coal burners; St. Lucia's artists; St. Lucia's dialect; St. Lucia's history; St. Lucia's superstitions; St. Lucia's fading aristocracy; St. Lucia's religion, and, most of all, St. Lucia's ordinary characters, bums and figures of fun, whom he ennobled into heroic Greek prototypes. Derek Walcott used the peculiar alchemy of his craft of words to transform the dross of St. Lucian street and country life into a finely-spun tableau of classical literature.

Castries, St. Lucia's capital, is where Walcott was born, on January 23, 1930. The Castries of that time was one of a string of picturesque colonial towns in the Windward Islands—the part of the French- and English-speaking archipelago which curves down through the Eastern Caribbean toward the shoulder of South America. The finer residential houses in old Castries—many with spacious verandas, wrought-iron balconies, and red-painted mansards—nestled among bougainvillea, allamanda, crotons, coconut palms, and flaming poinsettias. To the northwest, the capital looked out upon the Bay of Castries and its shoreline, which was dotted with sea-grape trees.

Growing up in Castries, Walcott was less than impressed with what he now remembers as its "ancient and lyrical architecture." His attention was drawn more strongly to the shanties of the poor, in Castries and elsewhere on the island, occupied by fascinating characters, some of whom later appeared in his book-length autobiographical poem, "Another Life." Beyond the sociology of the land, young Walcott's imagination was transfixed by the sea: its sounds; its fishermen and schooner men; its far horizon of limits and possibilities; the dangerous seductions of its calm and stormy moods; its record of local drownings; its legends of shipwreck and isolation. St. Lucia seemed to him at times like an island of wrecked seafarers. He was to write in "Prelude," one of his early poems:

> . . . the steamers which divide horizons prove
> Us lost;
> Found only
> In tourist booklets, behind ardent binoculars.

And in "The Castaway," a later work, he referred to "the starved eye" of a Crusoe-like character who "devours the seascape for the morsel / Of a sail."

The Homeric terms in which Walcott eventually portrayed aspects of St. Lucian life were derived in part from what he heard about the island as he grew up. He recalls reading in schoolbooks that "St. Lucia was the Helen of the West Indies, because she had been fought over so often by the French and the British." From the sixteen-hundreds to 1814, when the Treaty of Paris finally ceded St. Lucia to the British, the two rivals for the island's charms—and for colonial territory and power—captured and recaptured St. Lucia at least thirteen times. "She had been regularly violated," Walcott recalls from his early readings, "and her final capture by the British had the quality of a cuckold's surrender, since she remained faithful to her French-colonial past."

French tradition in St. Lucia was never to be totally suppressed by the establishment of English culture. It survives most obviously in religion: ninety per cent of the island's population is Roman Catholic. Many towns and villages retain their old names—Pointe du Cap, Choiseul, Micoud, Soufrière, Laborie, Vieux Fort. The French tongue lives on in an underground of patois, fed by St. Lucia's contacts with Martinique, just twenty-five miles to the north. English, in standard and dialect forms, is the reigning language, and even those forms are modulated by the melody and cadence of French Creole.

Small though St. Lucia may be, it is one of the larger islands in the Windward group. It is mountainous, with lush foliage, and is two hundred and thirty-eight square miles in area. Its population, of approximately a hundred and fifty thousand, is predominantly black and mulatto. Fishing, charcoal-making, and farming (coconuts, bananas, sugarcane) were its main sources of income until the relatively recent development of a tourist industry. Perhaps because of the smallness of St. Lucia and the poverty of its resources, Walcott tended to say in later years that he sprang from "a colonial backwater." Backwater or not, it has the distinction of having produced two Nobel Prize winners in the past thirteen years: Sir Arthur Lewis, in Economics, in 1979, and now Walcott.

From their sources in St. Lucian life, the concerns that became the focus of Walcott's writing extended gradually to include much of the English-speaking Caribbean. And part of what that writing mirrors is the multi-ethnic character of West Indian culture—a culture of people descended from aboriginal Caribs and from Africans, Chinese, East Indians, Europeans, Lebanese, Syrians, and the products of intermarriage, all living together in reasonable, if not perfect, harmony. Walcott is of mixed African and European extraction: his grandmothers were descended from slaves, his grandfathers were English and Dutch. It has been a special effort of his to remain conscious of the union within him of the two racial and social strains, acknowledging himself very early to be "a divided child." The character Shabine, in Walcott's poem "The Schooner *Flight*," is plainly the poet himself: "I'm just a red nigger who love the sea, / . . . I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, / and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation."

WALCOTT'S career may be said to have been launched in fire. At eighteen, he wrote a sonnet about a fire that, on a Saturday night in June of 1948, burned most of Castries to the ground:

> After that hot gospeller had levelled all but the churched sky,
> I wrote the tale by tallow of a city's death by fire;
> Under a candle's eye that smoked in tears, I
> Wanted to tell, in more than wax, of faiths that were snapped like wire.
> All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,
> Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar. . . .
> To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath
> Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,
> Blessing the death and the baptism by fire.

The Castries fire had a liberating effect on Walcott's social imagination. It pleased him to think that the conflagration had burned down almost all the houses of social and cultural power—until he saw that, miraculously, the Roman Catholic church was still standing, unsinged. It was what the "hot gospeller" had spared, against "the churched sky." Above the vacant horizon, it looked down with invincible authority upon the charred and (from the ecclesiastical perspective) partly sinful remains of the city. Most places of privilege were gone, leaving, according to an essay of Walcott's, "blackened walls, ridiculous arches of doorways," and "steps that marched in air." The catastrophe, he wrote in a memoir, had "humiliated the smug, repetitive lives of those civil servants, merchants, and Creole professional men who had lived in rambling wooden houses with verandahs and mansards, attics for mongoloids, alcoholic uncles, and half-racked aging aunts." A good deal of the "rigidly constructed French-colonial life" had vanished in smoke. But there remained, of course, the edifice of severe Catholic morality—as it was seen by Walcott, who belonged to the tiny Methodist minority of Castries. "I learnt early to accept that Methodists went to Hell, a Catholic Hell, or to Purgatory after some strenuous dispensation," he later wrote. "I was thus, in boyhood, estranged not only from another God but from the common life of the island. Per-

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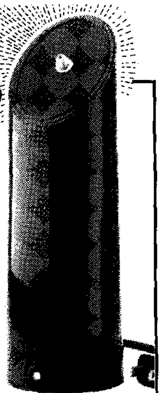

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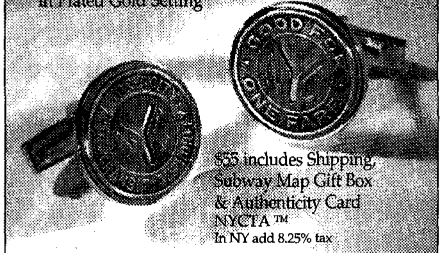

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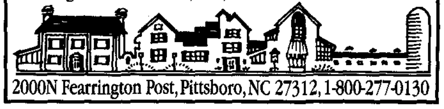

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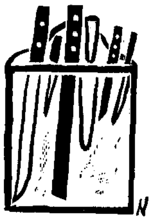
haps it was this that made me find in the actual hell of the great fire a certain exultation, since it had destroyed that other life."

Walcott's growth into a free-spirited artist clashed on occasion with the island's religious establishment, and around the age of nineteen he began thinking of leaving St. Lucia. So authoritarian a religious climate deterred the growth of an enterprising literary figure. "The system under which we lived was one in which any departure from the religious canon was considered absolutely blasphemous," he would recall in an essay. The "Catholic destitution" of the peasantry was "a state of grace" that he, "being part-white and Methodist," could "never achieve." He wished to have, like a fisherman, the full feel of his small boat, or to be "as free as a canoe out on the ocean." In St. Lucia, no such freedom seemed achievable.



Late in September of 1950, he arrived in Kingston, Jamaica, to begin reading for an arts degree at the University of the West Indies—an institution so recently established that its degrees were still being granted by the University of London.

JAMAICA, a thousand miles from St. Lucia and the Eastern Caribbean, is the largest (forty-five hundred square miles) and the oldest (it was captured by Oliver Cromwell's Navy in 1655) of the former British colonies in the West Indies. Because of its long-sustained ties with Britain, it was, by early in this century—in a number of its cultural and class dispositions—the most English of the Caribbean colonies. The black élite of its upper middle class came to be seen—and to see themselves—as "Afro-Saxons." When Walcott's twin brother, Roderick, a playwright, visited him at the university in Kingston, Roderick said a few weeks ago (from his residence in Toronto), it seemed to him that "Jamaica was England's special island in the West Indies—it had a kind of cosmopolitan sophistication that other Caribbean islands didn't have." Jamaicans sooner thought of visiting London or New York than any city on another Caribbean island, for their geographical isolation had estranged them psychologically from their fellow-islanders in the region.

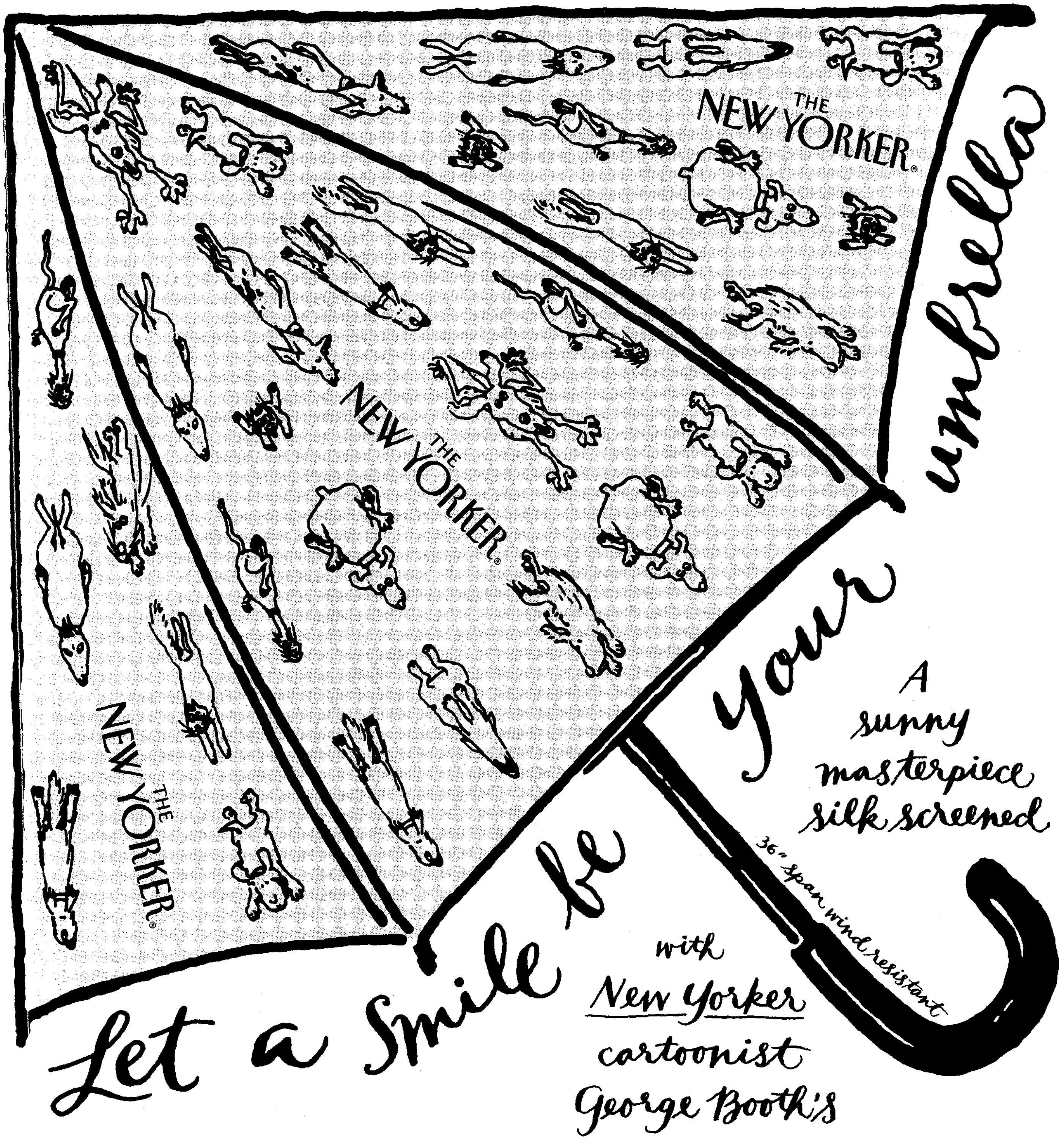
That began to change in 1948, when the University of the West Indies was founded. Its campus became a virtual laboratory of regional integration, as Jamaicans found themselves mingling for almost the first time with islanders from all parts of the English-speaking Caribbean. Previously, only on the inter-island cricket fields had there been such a close association. Jamaican journalists commented on the impressive "West Indianness" of the university community, the surprising absence of insular tensions and jealousies. For Derek Walcott, "it was a marvellous experience, meeting and forming relationships with so many young men and women from the various islands, the growing family of West Indian intellect being shaped together in an atmosphere of harmony."

In the Jamaica of the early nineteen-fifties, Walcott was impressed by signs of a social and political awakening that had begun there in the late nineteen-thirties. Led by a group of Oxford-educated Fabians, notably a barrister named Norman Manley, a vigorous movement for national independence had developed—more advanced than anything of its kind elsewhere in the English Caribbean. Around Manley's People's National Party there had gathered the island's first truly post-Victorian generation of poets, painters, fiction writers, and cultural intellectuals, and their work radiated a nationalistic Jamaican sense of being. "The island was amazingly exciting," Walcott recalls today. "There was good theatre, good Jamaican painters, fine galleries, gifted poets and prose writers, most of whom I came to know very well. For a time, I did a bit of feature writing for *Public Opinion*, the weekly paper of Manley's political party, which was then the best intellectual journal on the island. There was something electrifying in the cultural air. I found the educated classes to be extremely elegant and confident, exemplifying the sort of Afro-Caribbean self-confidence that can be easily mistaken for arrogance."

But some aspects of the local assertiveness weren't quite compatible with Walcott's sense of his mixed racial and cultural background. Many of the Jamaican intellectuals were militant African nationalists, imbued with the ideological legacy of Marcus Garvey, one of the more famous of Jamaica's native sons. Walcott's African feeling was neither militant nor nationalist: it was but one among the many facets he honored in the complexity of his racial and social makeup. In ancestry and cultural heritage he epitomized the composite New World culture in the Caribbean—roughly half black and half white—and he had no desire to elevate one component above the other. The two were reconciled in his view of himself as an artist and a "divided child." He had a profound awareness of his ties to the painful history of African experience in the West—even as he was elated by the English language and rejoiced in his inheritance of its literature. But the murderous confrontation between the Mau Mau and the white colonists of Kenya in the early nineteen-fifties—wanton slaughter on each side—triggered within him a crisis of identity such as he had never felt before. Which side of the carnage could he be on? Out of that anguish came "A Far Cry from Africa," the most eloquent poem he wrote during his sojourn in Jamaica. It reads, in part:

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?

In 1958, four years after graduating from the university in Jamaica, Walcott arrived in New York, on a theatre fellowship sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. For much of the next year, he studied directing and set design under José Quintero, at the Circle in the Square, and Stuart Vaughan, at the Phoenix Theatre. But the New York experience was an unhappy one for Walcott. He felt terribly alone in the city, an alien in its racial and theatrical communities—repelled, almost, by its segregated sensibilities. Neither Broadway nor Off Broadway seemed the right model for the kind of theatre he had envisioned for the West Indies. The black-theatre movement hadn't yet fully emerged, so it offered him no instructive ideas. In any case, he doubted he would be interested in black theatre, as a distinct American category, "because I came from the Caribbean, where all ethnic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groupings worked together in the theatre."

The kind of theatre Walcott had in mind for the West Indies was one that would combine indigenous and classical styles, the spontaneity of folk ritual and the intellectual rigor of dramatic narrative. He felt, he later wrote, that "the strength of the West Indian psyche is a fusion of formalism with exuberance, a delight in both the precision and the power of language. We love rhetoric, and this has created a style, a panache about life that is particularly ours." In 1959, Walcott returned to the West Indies and settled in Trinidad, for he saw that island as the most suitable environment for the shaping of a Caribbean-style theatre.

In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, Trinidad—and particularly its capital, Port of Spain—was the cultural center of the Eastern Caribbean. Walcott fell in love with Port of Spain. There, in the basement of the Hotel Normandie, he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop; assembled and trained a company of actors; and wrote and produced plays on the myths, rituals, and superstitions of West Indian folk life. When the most successful of those efforts, "The Dream on Monkey Mountain," was staged in New York, it won an Obie Award as the best foreign play of 1971. Edith Oliver, in this magazine, called it a "masterpiece."

WALCOTT'S involvement with the theatre was never more than ancillary to his vocation as a poet. Of the poems he wrote in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties, some appeared in literary magazines, but most of them accumulated in his desk. Perhaps the worst consequence of his decision to remain a writer in the Caribbean was that he had no access to publishing houses: there were none in the English-speaking sectors of the region. Because of that lack, a great many gifted West Indian writers had migrated to England—people like George Lamming, Wilson Harris, John Hearne, Roger Mais, Andrew Salkey, Edgar Mittelholzer, Samuel Selvon, and V. S. Naipaul.

While visiting Trinidad in 1961, Alan Ross, the editor of *The London Magazine*, spent an evening reading from Walcott's unpublished verse. He took a number of the poems back to London and sent them on to the book publisher Jonathan Cape. Cape liked them, and in 1962 they appeared under the title "In a Green Night"—the first volume of Walcott's poetry to be commercially published. In 1963, Robert Lowell, who had read and admired "In a Green Night," and was making a trip to Brazil, paused for a few days in Port of Spain to make the acquaintance of the author. "Lowell phoned, and I went to see him and his wife Elizabeth Hardwick, at the Queen's Park Hotel," Walcott recalls. "I couldn't have been more excited. From there we drove to a house they rented not far from the city. I remember there were gas lamps in it. And I remember sitting on the living-room floor while Lowell showed me some of the poems he was working on. I was so flattered to hear this great writer asking me what I thought of his work. When he returned to New York, he called up Roger Straus and urged him to sign me on as a new writer. I've been with Straus's publishing house ever since."

In 1964, when Farrar, Straus & Giroux brought out Walcott's "Selected Poems," Robert Graves commented, "Derek Walcott handles English with a closer understanding of its inner magic than most (if not any) of his English-born contemporaries." That auspicious début foreshadowed a prolific output. In 1965 and 1969, Jonathan Cape brought out "The Castaway and Other Poems" and "The Gulf and Other Poems," respectively. Since then, the following titles have appeared under the Farrar, Straus & Giroux imprint: "The Gulf" (1970), "Another Life" (1973), "Sea Grapes" (1976), "The Star-Apple Kingdom" (1979), "The Fortunate Traveller" (1981), "Midsummer" (1984), "Collected Poems" (1986), "The Arkansas Testament" (1987), and "Omeros" (1990).

It is fellow-poets, like Graves, Seamus Heaney, and Joseph Brodsky, who have been most unstinting in their praise of Walcott's writing. "Walcott possesses English more deeply and sonorously than most of the English themselves," Heaney has said. Brodsky wrote in 1983, four years before he himself won the Nobel Prize,

> For the almost forty years that Walcott has been at it, at this loving sea, critics on both sides have dubbed him "a West Indian poet" or "a black poet from the Caribbean." These definitions are as myopic and misleading as it would be to call the Saviour a Galilean. . . . The mental as well as spiritual cowardice, obvious in the attempts to render this man a regional writer, can be further explained by the unwillingness of the critical profession to admit that the great poet of the English language is a black man.

Those are not exactly the terms in which Walcott himself would state the argument. "I am primarily, absolutely a Caribbean poet," he told an interviewer in 1985. What he would emphasize, however, is that "the English language is nobody's special property," that "it is the property of the imagination," and that he has "never felt inhibited in trying to write as well as the greatest English poets."

d. ehrenberg

WALCOTT has been living partly in the United States since the early nineteen-seventies, when he began serving as a visiting lecturer at universities such as Columbia, Rutgers, Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. Since the winter of 1982, he has been teaching at Boston University. During these years, he has suffered none of the loneliness and isolation he experienced in his first New York visit. He has made many friends in New York, among them Brodsky, Straus, Patricia Strachan (his former editor at Farrar, Straus & Giroux), Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Hardwick, and, until his death, Robert Lowell. "Derek is a beautiful man and a beautiful writer, and we've all stood by him through the good times and bad," Straus says.

A very bad time came in the fall of 1981, when a student in the poetry workshop that Walcott then taught at Harvard accused him of sexual harassment. Lodging her complaint with the college administration, she charged that ever since she had had occasion to rebuff Walcott's unwelcome sexual advances she had been unable to earn more than a C in the coursework she did for him. Walcott denied the charge. He said his accuser had misinterpreted a casual remark he made in a conversation over coffee. Harvard found merit in the student's complaint, however, and dissolved its relationship with Walcott. He moved to Boston University, but the national publicity had been embarrassing. "I'm beginning to feel like the beast of Boston," he said at one point.

A princely descendant of Boston who would have gladly stood by him was no longer around: Robert Lowell, with whom he had developed one of his closest friendships, had died in 1977. Lowell's poetry had a profound influence on some of Walcott's later work, as critics had recognized in a good deal of the verse Walcott wrote after the two poets first met. A reviewer of Walcott's "Collected Poems" said in 1986, "There are times when the influence is almost too direct, as in 'Old New England,' where he paces off Lowell's own territory." When Walcott arrived from Trinidad to take up his first teaching appointment on the East Coast, Lowell and Hardwick threw him a welcoming party in New York and introduced him to their circle of friends. Walcott, to whom Lowell was "a lovable person and a tremendous poet," acknowledges the older writer's "great influence" on him. Lowell would have been "an unavoidable influence for any writer," he believes.

But later there was a terrible falling-out between the two men, caused by a remark Lowell made at the beginning of one of his frequent nervous breakdowns. Walcott recalled the rupture in a tribute to Lowell that he wrote in 1984:

> "You use people," he told me. The insult went deep. Did he think I had cultivated his friendship to advance my career? I was not an American poet. I did not think in those terms. For there to be a career there had to be a tradition, and my new literature had none. A career, like that of any explorer's, was instantaneous. Did I feed off his verse like a parasite to fatten my own? *That* I would have confessed to, because his influence was irresistible. Yet what imagination was more omnivorous than his? Yes, I said to myself above the pain, I had used him. But only as I had used other masters, ancient and modern. . . .
>
> My style had been, perhaps still is, that of a magpie. A bit here, a bit there, hopping from one poet to another, but it wasn't that of a buzzard. I had practiced Imitations all my life, and I had given up hope of not sounding like Lowell.

The estrangement lasted longer than either would have liked. Finally, Lowell invited Walcott to his apartment, on West Sixty-seventh Street. Walcott accepted, he said in his tribute, with "the tears edging my eyes," as he looked forward to "the dissolving sweetness of reconciliation." Lowell opened the front door—"hunched, gentle, soft-voiced"—and "muttered his apology." Walcott gave him "a hard hug, and the old love deepened."

"And I must borrow a black tie / And at what moment in the oration / shall I break down and weep—" Walcott wrote upon hearing the news of Lowell's death. It was at the funeral service in Boston that he met Joseph Brodsky. Walcott was sharing a pew with Straus, Sontag, and Strachan when the Russian poet strolled in and sat next to him. Walcott glanced at the stranger, and noticed how pluckily his face "jutted" out and up. "If he isn't going to cry," Walcott said to himself, "then neither will I." When the ceremony ended, they were introduced; Brodsky would become as close a friend as Lowell had been.

"What I have learned from my friendship with Joseph is industry," Walcott says today. "When I met him, I was sort of coasting on my lyric gift. I had stopped thinking. Meeting him reminded me that poetry wasn't all about lyrical expression—music and singing and dancing. It was about thought as well. And I began thinking again. I rediscovered an admirable aspect of poetry, the movement of the intellect. That's the example of Brodsky's industry. There has also been the example of his courage, the reticence of his suffering. When his mother and father were dying, in Russia, he couldn't go home to see them. He had lost his language, lost his country, lost his parents. Yet he never bitched. He displayed no self-pity—only, always, this dismissive and ironic kind of courage."

Walcott treasures his friendship with Brodsky and also with Seamus Heaney. All three—all immigrant poets—get along without a trace of professional rivalry or jealousy. All three are published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, and Roger Straus is astonished by their relationship. "It is extraordinary," he says. "Could you imagine Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Isaac Singer, and Bernard Malamud getting along so noncompetitively? It is a rare and beautiful thing, this respectful and admiring friendship shared by the three greatest poets alive today."

"OMEROS," which is perhaps Walcott's boldest act of imagination so far, depicts and reflects upon the historical passage of the common life in St. Lucia, symbolizing the Caribbean. Adding to the applause that greeted the book's

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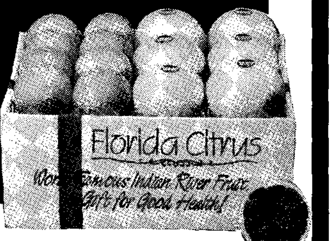

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publication, the poet Brad Leithauser wrote in these pages, "There is a loud call of anguish at the center of 'Omeros,' but the book is something more—something better—than a simple cry from the heart. It's a complex cry from the heart, for Walcott has succeeded in filtering all sorts of titanic sorrows through a limpid and ferocious intellect."

What led Walcott to attempt a Greek-style epic of ordinary Caribbean experience—its characters bearing names like Helen, Achille, Hector, and Afolabe? Perhaps because his island was called the Helen of the West Indies, Walcott says, "in childhood, we sang a song called 'Helen of Troy,' and our imaginations transformed the marble Helen into a black one—the Helen that was St. Lucia. Also, when you grew up on a small island you found that the sea was a constant presence—its sounds and its salty air. All our roads lead to it. And that sea, when you looked out upon it, was an immensity of ocean. Then, you were also constantly aware of the people who lived off the sea. The fisherman and the schooner man—each was an industrious figure. Hurricanes were there, torrential tropical rains were there. All the elemental forces were part of the rhythm of living in the Caribbean archipelago.

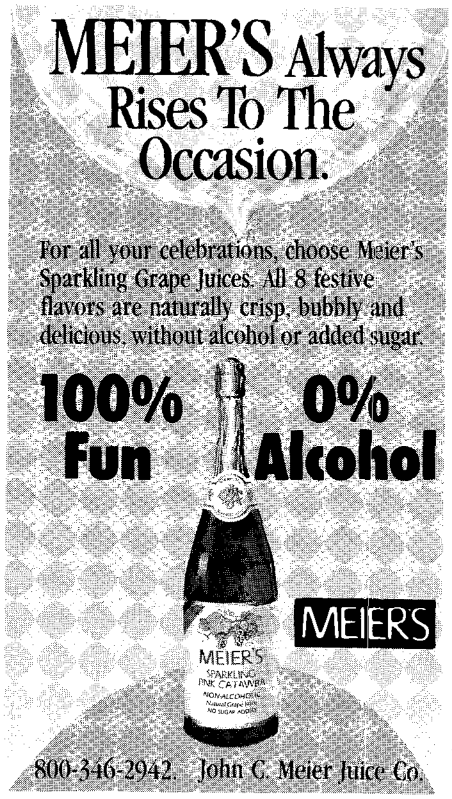
"Later, much later, it seemed to me that Homer was writing about a kind of morning of the world in the Aegean. I saw in his work an elation, a delight in elemental weather—weather similar to ours in the West Indian archipelago. So the Aegean and the Caribbean became synonymous in my mind. This wasn't to make black Greeks out of our local fishermen and seagoers. But my memory was full of stories about St. Lucian fishermen who went to sea and were never seen again—swallowed up in raging storms. So all that helped to form the idea that gave 'Omeros' its genesis." Perhaps the idea had been strengthened by Walcott's reading of St. John Perse, an older, white Caribbean influence, who was born and grew up on the French-speaking island of Guadeloupe. Some years before he wrote "Omeros," Walcott had said, "In Perse, there is the greatest width of elemental praise of winds, seas, rains. . . . His are poems of massive or solitary migrations through the elements."

Walcott speaks with surprising modesty about "Omeros," without whose impact he might not have been chosen for the Nobel Prize. He is flattered by all the good things he has heard and read about the book, and he likes the critical position that it seems to have won him, but he doesn't consider "Omeros" extraordinary: "I believe, as I've said elsewhere, that the epic poem is not a literary project. It's already written. It is written in the mouths of the tribe, a tribe which had courageously yielded its history. It's extraordinary only in the sense that it is a big book, a sustained technical achievement. But the book had already been written in the mouths of the Caribbean tribe. And I felt that I had been chosen, somehow, to give it voice. So the utterance was inevitable. I didn't care how the book would be critically received. I was writing it for the island people from whom I come. In a sense, I saw it as a long thank-you note. I didn't think I was writing something of great critical importance."

Nevertheless, it was "Omeros" that clinched his winning of the Nobel. And even if the prize came two years later than many of his admirers had expected, it is fitting that Walcott should have won in 1992, the quincentenary of Columbus's inaugural visit to the Caribbean.

ALTHOUGH Walcott's winning of the Nobel Prize has been widely and wildly applauded in the West Indies, a minority of cultural intellectuals dissent from the Swedish Academy's view that in Walcott "West Indian culture has found its great poet." That is a distinction they would assign to Edward Brathwaite, a Barbadian-born writer, who for many years taught history at the University of the West Indies.

Some years ago, the novelist George Lamming wrote, "Walcott is not popular among a later generation of cultural nationalists, who, in his view, have sought to turn white mythology on its head by discovering in blackness a new aristocracy of skin." Brathwaite's aim, on the other hand, has been—according to the St. Lucian-born critic Patricia Ismond—"to set in vibration an awareness that is predominantly black; to liberate a way of thinking and feeling that is essentially new in so far as it is devoid of all the strains and elements of the Western myth. . . . His aesthetic motivation, the creation of a Black Word, separate and distinct from the Western Word, is what predominates."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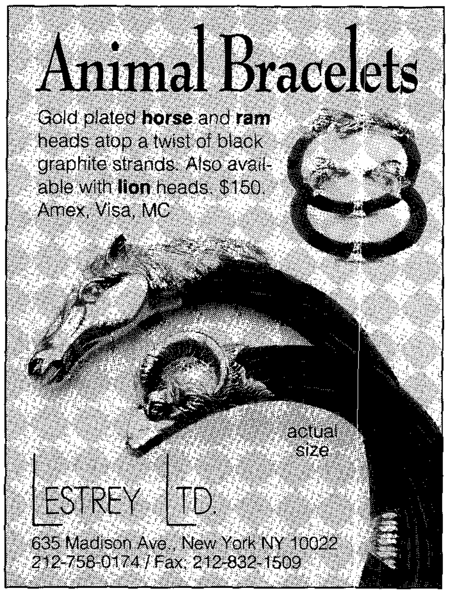
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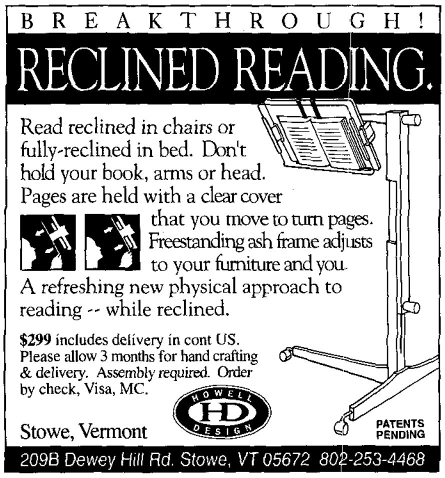
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The middle ground of interpretation is occupied by those cultural intellectuals who take the view that the differences between Walcott and Brathwaite have been exaggerated—that they are only skin-deep, so to speak. Among the abler spokesmen for that position is Rex Nettleford, a former classmate of Walcott's at the University of the West Indies (and later a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford), who is now a vice-chancellor of U.W.I. and is also the artistic director of Jamaica's National Dance Theatre Company. Nettleford said recently, speaking from Kingston, "In my judgment, Walcott and Brathwaite are going in the same direction, walking different roads. But they have attracted their aficionados and camp followers, each side considering the other to be inferior. A certain lyricism has emerged from Walcott's work, from the contradictions he writes about. A key to his consciousness is that he's a product of all his ancestors. Brathwaite might feel this, too, but he prefers to root his work in a strong African sensibility. And Walcott's emphasis on a mixed cultural ancestry is very uncomfortable to readers with an Afrocentric feeling. But Walcott does have a greater body of work than Brathwaite does, and he *is* the more technically accomplished writer. His language has ennobled the Caribbean landscape.

"As the founder and director of a dance theatre, trying to articulate a distinct vision and idiom of Caribbean dance expression, I quite understand this question of cultural ancestry that dominates so much of Walcott's creative thinking. In a sense, we're kindred spirits, trying to create a unity out of disparity—he through the media of poetry and drama, and I through the medium of movement. Some people have found our work too brown, others have found it too black. But it is the turbulence and ambivalence and chaos of the region that give our work its dynamism.

"Walcott is a very good choice for the Nobel Prize, and we're proud of him. The judges in Stockholm were very perceptive. He's a great poet, and in 1992 he's the West Indian writer most deserving of recognition. His work signifies the cultural integrity emerging from the tremendous cross-fertilization in Caribbean life and history. It reminds us that we have no common mint of origin, only a common mint of relations." ♦

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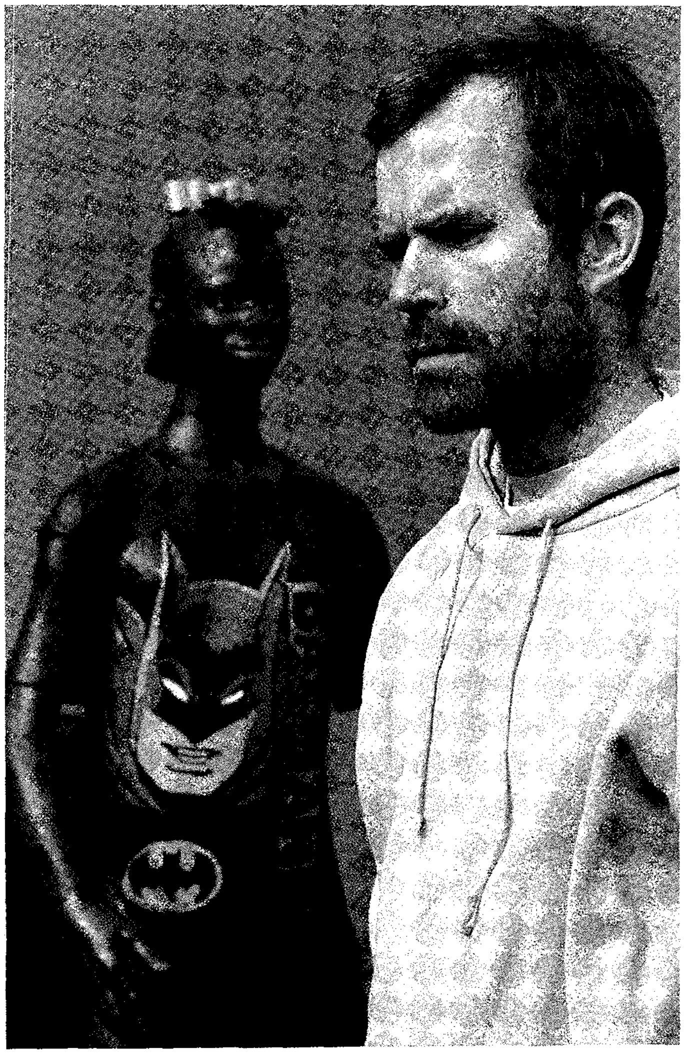
IN THE SOUTH BRONX

WHOSE ART IS IT?

by Jane Kramer

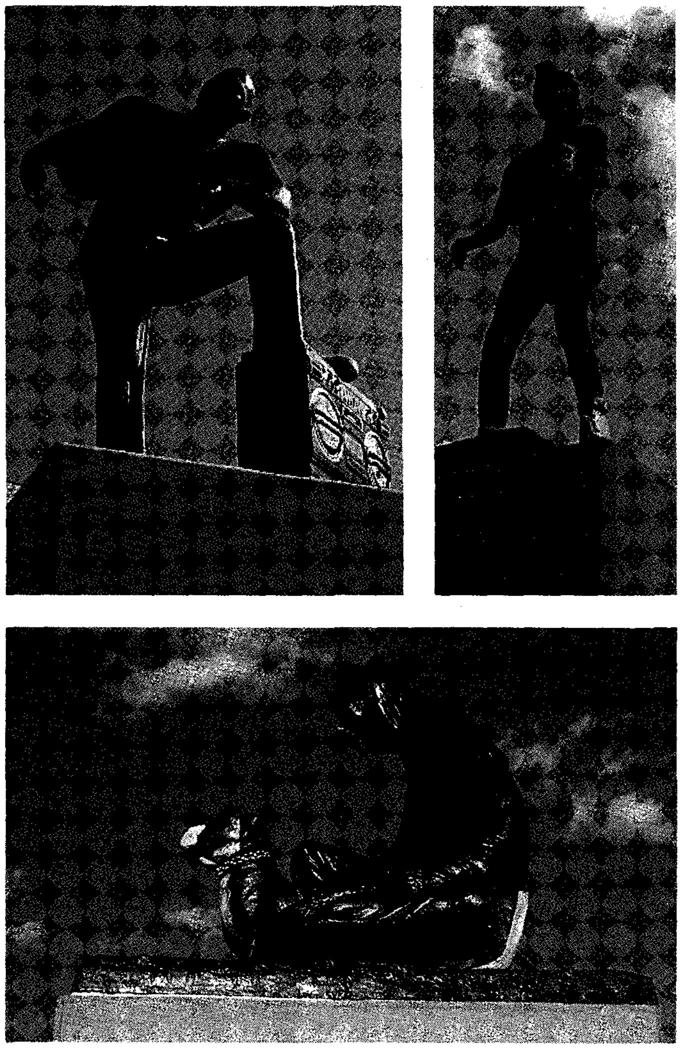
It could be argued that the South Bronx bronzes fit right into the neighborhood—that whatever a couple of people said about bad role models and negative images and political incorrectness, there was something seemly and humane, and even, in a rueful, complicated way, "correct," about casting Raymond and his pit bull, Daleesha and her roller skates, and Corey and his boom box and basketball in the metal of Ghiberti, Donatello, and Rodin and putting them up on pedestals, like patron saints of Jerome Avenue. John Ahearn, who made the statues, says that he thought of them more as guardians than as saints, because their job was ambiguous, standing, as they did for a couple of days last year, between the drab new station house of the city's 44th Police Precinct and what is arguably one of its poorest, saddest, shabbiest, most drug-infested, AIDS-infected, violent neighborhoods. John himself is ambiguous about "ambiguous." He says that when the city asked him to "decorate" the precinct he thought of the Paseo de la Reforma, in Mexico City, with its bronze heroes—a mile of heroes. He thought that maybe it would be interesting—or at least accurate to life on a calamitous South Bronx street, a street of survivors—to commemorate a few of the people he knew who were having trouble surviving the street, even if they were trouble themselves. He wanted the police to acknowledge them, and he wanted the neighbors, seeing them cast in bronze and up on pedestals, to stop and think about who they were and about what he calls their "South Bronx attitude."


DUANE MICHALS

Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha may not have been the best of the neighborhood. Raymond Garcia, at thirty-three, is in and out of jail. Corey Mann, at twenty-four, is in and out of jobs. Daleesha, at fourteen, is a street child, in and out of junior high school. But they are a homegrown part of the neighborhood, and John, who lives in the neighborhood, too, and likes it, likes *them*—in an edgy, apprehensive way. They exasperate John, and occasionally they alarm him, the way they do the other people on the block, and, indeed, the people in their own families, but they belong to the reality of the shattered social contract we call the inner city, and John wanted them to stand in something of the same relation to the precinct policemen that they do to him and the neighbors. They may be trouble, but they are human, and they are there.

John is neither an innocent nor a fool. He is one of the best artists of his generation. He has a reputation. Right now, there is a show of his work at the Baltimore Museum of Art, and people have seen the painted casts he makes, in the South Bronx, at the Whitney and the Tate and the Art Institute of Chicago and a dozen other important museums. Those casts, at the Brooke Alexander gallery, on Wooster Street, in SoHo, cost anywhere from twelve to forty thousand dollars. Some of John's neighbors call him "saintly," since they do not easily understand what a famous white artist—a "downtown" artist, with a fancy gallery, and museum shows, and critics at his door, and a big retrospective catalogue—is doing living in a stripped-down sixth-floor slum apartment on one of the worst streets in New York City, hanging out with people like Raymond and Corey, and they suspect he has some sort of crazy penitential Christian purpose, like Father Hennessy, his priest at the Church of Christ the King, around the corner. John and Patrick Hennessy and a homeless street sweeper named Roberta Nazat, whose own Christian purpose is cleaning the right side of 170th Street between Walton and Jerome (and who sleeps on a couch at John's when the nights get cold), are about the only white people in the neighborhood, but John does not put himself in the same class of "saintly" as Father Hennessy or Bobbie the Sweeper. Sometimes he describes himself as "like an itinerant portrait painter," and sometimes as "like Raul," who manufactures plaster santeros for the Bronx botanicas, but that is ingenuous. When he is talking about art, the names he invokes are Caravaggio, who took the poor for his models "and blew art history away," and van Gogh, who took the postman and his wife and made them live forever. John has work up all over the neighborhood—there are fibreglass casts of the neighbors on four big building walls and plaster "portraits" in nearly everyone's apartment. Some people in the art world found that work sentimental, and John says that when he started making his bronzes for the 44th Precinct he was determined "to make art, make a statement," something with edge and irony and "complications." He says now that this was his mistake: he should have been thinking about making people happy. Five days after he put the bronzes up, he hired a truck and took them down, and they ended up in the yard at P.S. 1 in Long Island City, the museum where white people from Manhattan often go to look at "statements." The statues themselves look safe, even benign, at P.S. 1, but they do not look like they belong there. They are, in the jargon of public sculpture, "site specific"—though some of the policemen who saw them at the corner of Jerome Avenue and 169th Street last year prefer the word "confrontational" to describe them. No one who saw them could deny they had the "bad" South Bronx attitude. When they were up on their pedestals—at the edge of a little concrete park the city calls a "traffic triangle"—they looked less like monuments than like the Corey, Raymond, and Daleesha whom John thought everybody knew, only metal. They were part of the crowd. They belonged to the cocky, come-on quality of the street, to the rusty train trestle and the trashed cars and the machine shops and gaudy botanicas and rice-and-beans counters, to the dealers and hookers and welfare studs and the hip-hop children hurrying home from school with their clothes on backward, and even to the angry and respectable neighbors who complained about negative images—ghetto images—and convinced John that he should take them down.

Some of those neighbors wanted statues of Martin Luther King or Malcolm X, or statues of children in their graduation gowns, or of mothers carrying home the groceries, or of men in suits on their way to important jobs downtown—something to show the good side of the neighborhood to white people driving down Jerome to Yankee Stadium for a game, or taking a Bronx shortcut to their peaceful, prosperous suburban neighborhoods. A couple of policemen wanted statues of friendly policemen, helping people across the street or playing with babies. A couple of black bureaucrats talked about the pain of the neighborhood, and about people like Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha, lost to the streets, and about what happened when white artists like John Ahearn "glorified" that loss and insulted *them.* A lot of phone calls got made before the movers came, and a lot of politicians started worrying about petitions and protests and television crews and the Reverend Al Sharpton, and about John's three statues turning into a full-blown race scandal. It made no difference that the black Mayor of New York City, David Dinkins, had borrowed a fibreglass cast of Corey with his basketball and boom box and installed it on the lawn at Gracie Mansion when he presented the keys to the city to the black filmmaker Spike Lee. Or that the people who wanted statues of men in suits instead of Corey, Raymond, and Daleesha might be mocking the pain of the neighborhood as much as they thought John had mocked it, since in the South Bronx the men in suits are generally the men who are trying desperately to leave, not the men who have to stay. It made no difference that Corey, Raymond, and Daleesha might not think of themselves as "negative stereotypes"—though Raymond often says that as far as any kind of "correctness" goes he does not have much of a reputation. Raymond was distressed for his pit bull, who had died, because he loved the dog, and the thought that it would "live in bronze" consoled him. Raymond heard that "the community" didn't like the statues—but as far as he was concerned the community was the block where he and Corey and, indeed, John lived. The community was four buildings on Walton Avenue between 171st Street and 172nd Street, and had nothing to do with anyone five blocks south and one block west, at the traffic triangle. Raymond was right, because five blocks south and one block west turned out to be as far away as Manhattan. Raymond's community liked the



Are real people bad art? John Ahearn (opposite) and the bronzes he made of his South Bronx neighbors, which triggered a debate over political correctness.

TOM FINKELPEARL

"I wanted to get that Annie Leibovitz person to come over and take your birthday picture, but she doesn't return her calls."

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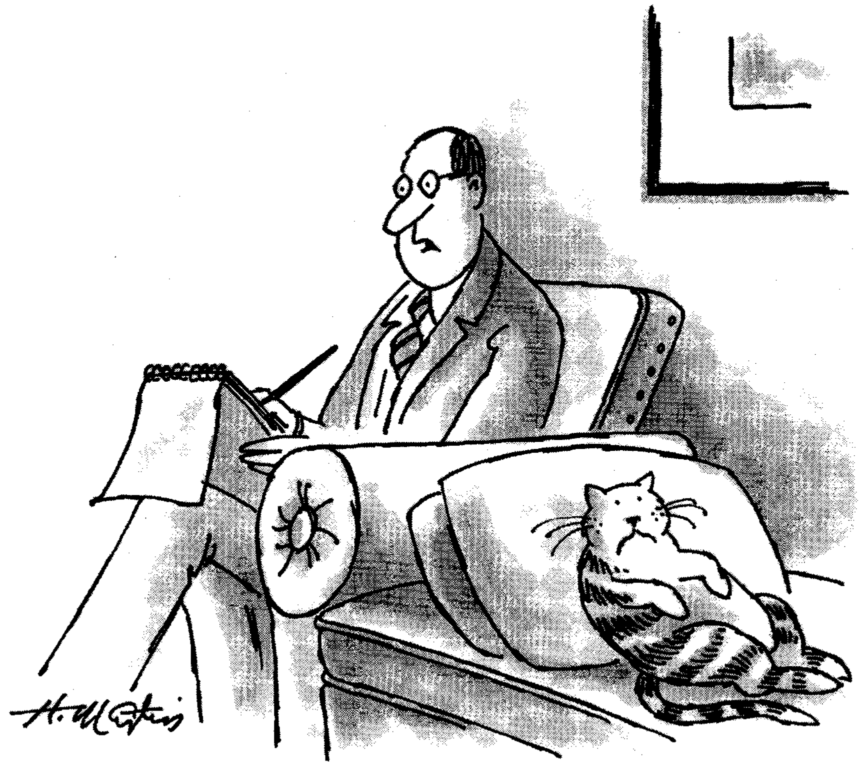
statues, but to the people complaining at the traffic triangle John Ahearn was a white man, and Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha were just the statues that shamed them.

No one knows how to settle, or even define, the argument over public art and political correctness. The art world says it's about censorship. The activists say it's about "controlling the images." The critics (depending on their politics) either quote Gilles Deleuze and say it's about "the indignity of speaking for others," or they quote Hilton Kramer and say it's about saving Western civilization. The politicians like to call it "the multicultural dialogue," but the truth is that at this particularly angry moment in New York City the multicultural dialogue is really a lot of strange and disheartening monologues. People are talking, but they are not talking to each other. It doesn't matter if they are talking about public art, or about "the white male literary canon," or about whether students at law school have to argue briefs for fathers who want custody of their children because their wives are lesbians, or about whether Cleopatra was black, or about whether Raymond with his pit bull is a proper role model for the South Bronx children. It doesn't matter if art is an accident of its "interpretive moment," as the deconstructionists say, or if art is "timeless" and addresses pure aesthetic values, as a lot of artists would say—though not John Ahearn, who says, "Hey, making somebody unhappy? That's not interesting, that's heavy!" It doesn't matter if a statue of Raymond and his pit bull offends the guys at the Jerome Avenue pizzeria because they have no "taste" or because Raymond refused to leave the dog outside when he was ordering pizza and there was nothing they could do about it, since the dog was vicious, or because they think the neighborhood should be "represented" by a statue of a man in a suit, or, indeed, by one of them. People are suffering in the South Bronx. They live with poverty and crime and crack and unemployment, and they die young, from illness and overdose and overexposure if they are not murdered first. In the language of the debate, they are "disempowered," and to the extent that the language is correct they cannot do much about it except attack what they take to be the symbols of their powerlessness—a statue they didn't make, a textbook they didn't choose, a vocabulary of assumptions about culture that are not *their* assumptions. Sometimes the symbols focus them. More often, the symbols subvert them, and they exhaust what little energy surviving in the South Bronx has left them. As John says, "on my block, even getting yourself on welfare implies a high level of getting it together." Today, the neighbors who objected to John's statues are without a work of art for their traffic triangle, because they were more interested in the argument than in the alternatives, more interested in talking about the correctness of the statues than in replacing them. No one has written to the city, or to the newspapers, saying, "We're the community, and we're going to make a new work possible." In fifteen months, no one has even asked.

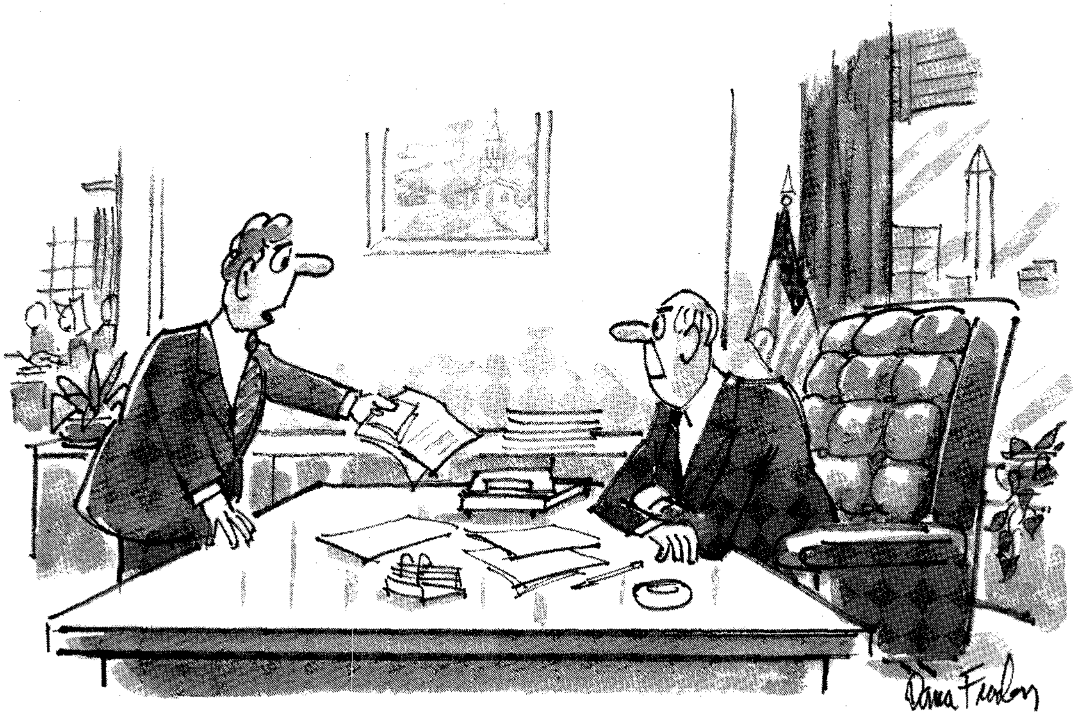
This is John's neighborhood: it is part of the poorest congressional district in the country; it has the fourth-highest rate of homicide in the city; a hundred and twenty thousand people live there, and a hundred and eighteen thousand are black or Hispanic; every second person is on some sort of public assistance; one out of every three adults is unemployed; one out of every four women tests H.I.V.-positive when she goes to the hospital to have a baby, and no one knows how many men would test positive if there were a way to get *them* to the hospital, any more than anyone knows how many men would test positive for crack or heroin or any of the street mixtures known as "speedballs." The facts, of course, are misleading. They do not account for thousands of illegal immigrants; they do not distinguish between black, white, and Indian "Hispanics" (who are listed as "nonwhite" in the census) or, for that matter, between "Hispanics" and "Latinos," who may or may not have Spanish as their first language. They do not distinguish between the Dominican dealers and the Jamaican posses who come to the Bronx for a couple of years and split with their drug money and the Puerto Rican mothers and grandmothers who appear at three in the afternoon, when school lets out, to chase those dealers off the street so the children can play. The facts are stereotypes of race and class and culture—much more than John Ahearn's statues were stereotypes—which is why people who thought the statues should stay worry about what it means about "stereotypes" when poor people give something away for nothing in return. John wants to replace the statues, but the city might have to sell Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha to pay for the bronze and the foundry, and it is not certain now that John (or art or the neighbors) would survive the process of choosing the subjects of "correct" representation under the scrutiny of his community board, the police, the city bureaucracy, the guys at the pizzeria, and the woman who stood at the traffic triangle stopping traffic last fall to ask people if Corey, shirtless and a little flabby, was the "representation" they wanted.

JOHN AHEARN is not the first New York artist to get caught up in arguments about representation. The year of the South Bronx bronzes was also the year that Jenny Marketou, a photographer with the job of decorating a Queens subway station, was accused of racism for taking pictures of Greek-Americans—she was Greek—instead of African-Americans, and the muralist Richard Haas, who had already decorated fifteen New York City walls, was asked to replace a panel in a series of reliefs on the history of immigration to New York. Haas had made the panels for the Baxter Street wall of a new city jail, on White Street. They were up for two years, and no one complained, but then a guard who had just been transferred from the prison on Rikers Island saw them, and told some friends at the Department of Correction Hispanic Society that what he took to be the "Hispanic" panel did not show "positive values," and after that a lot of people did complain. They said they didn't like the sign "Bodega" on a store on the panel, and they didn't like the fact that the bodega was closed—they thought it looked like "Hispanic failure," though Haas thought it looked like "Sunday"—and they didn't like the image of a junked car or of a woman with a bare midriff or of a man sleeping on the sidewalk. They thought the woman was a hooker and the man was drunk, and they were not much comforted or appeased when Haas said that the woman was based on a pretty blonde he had once seen in a book, roller-skating in Central Park, and that the man was homeless, and was there to "raise consciousness" in people walking by. Luis Cancel, the new commissioner of Cultural Affairs—and a Hispanic and an artist himself—called Haas then and told him "the process would continue." No one knew exactly *how* the process would continue, though people at Cultural Affairs talked about "the Phoenix precedent," which had to do with arguments about a piece of public art in Phoenix, and with how Phoenix settled those arguments. The "community" met, and friends of the artist's—his "advocates"—came to the meeting, and everyone testified, and then an "impartial jury" decided what the artist should do.

It was not a precedent that appealed to Haas, who says he preferred the kind of precedent set by Solomon on another one of his jailhouse panels—the mother who loved the baby most let go. He let go. He got together with six Hispanic leaders—they met in the Gauguin Room at Cultural Affairs, which was probably not the best room for talking about stereotypes. He had offered to change "bodega" to "supermarket" or "superette" or something else agreeable to them, but the leaders said no, "supermarket" was not enough, and eventually Haas painted out the panel, at his own expense. He offered to redo the panel. He asked for pictures of "appropriate" Hispanic images to consider, but he said he would refuse to submit his changes for "community" approval. He said that



"You needn't feel guilty. You earned the fortune you inherited by giving her great happiness while she was alive."



"Sir, would you take this latest warning of ecological disaster and pooh-pooh it for me?"

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political correctness was a kind of censorship, and "every bit as evil to me as the censorship of a Pat Buchanan or a Jesse Helms."

Richard Haas is a worldly man. He is not on a mission, like John Ahearn, who wants to live and work quietly in the South Bronx at least as much as he wanted his statues to stay. Haas lives in Yonkers and works in an Art Deco Chelsea loft, with Piranesis on the wall and old kilims on the floor, and eats at the Century Club, and he has sat on the Art Commission himself and thought a lot about the city, and about making the city beautiful. As far as Haas is concerned, he has nothing to apologize for, and nothing to regret, either, except the fact that the city, which considers his project incomplete, still owes him a fourteen-thousand-dollar final payment. It does not sit well with Haas to be called a racist. He thinks that if the Hispanics on White Street got to choose his images of *them*, then the Jews on Baxter Street could reasonably complain about his panel on Jewish immigration, because it has to do with a Jewish sweatshop, and then the Chinese community could complain, because his Chinese panel is "all about business, and nobody's smiling." He says that to understand the tyranny of correctness you should think about what happened to Diego Rivera, whose politics "sank his art," or Frida Kahlo, whose last painting was of Stalin with a rose. He worries that good artists, like John Ahearn, are going to be frightened away from public projects by correctness, because correctness is a kind of collaboration, and really has nothing to do with art, and that in the end the public will have to live with art that is "not just wrong but dull."

THERE is, of course, a lot of good, new public art in the city that everybody agrees on. No one complains about the ships that Donna Dennis put on a steel school fence, down by the old Washington Market docks, and called "Dreaming of Far Away Places," or about the terrazzo "rivers" of Africa that Houston Conwill laid on the floor of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, in Harlem. The people who fought to remove Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc" from Foley Square—it came down in 1989, after eight years of public protest—said that the arc was "ugly," "brutal," "intrusive," "hostile," "offensive," and "dangerous," and even that it cast a "sinister shadow," but none of them said that it was a bad role model, or was racist, or insulted minorities. When people argue about images, they are usually arguing about images of themselves.

Everybody in the art world knows the story of "How Ya Like Me Now?"—David Hammons' famous mural of a blond, blue-eyed Jesse Jackson. Hammons, who is black, installed it on a Washington street, and some black kids, thinking that a white artist was responsible, smashed it with sledgehammers. Hammons repaired it, and added their hammers to the piece, and now it is an icon. The moral of the story is that in these treacherously correct days one artist's insensitivity is easily another artist's ironic statement, and it seems to depend less on the artist himself than on what color people think he is.

John got the idea for Corey's boom box from Spike Lee. He knew that Radio Raheem, in Lee's movie "Do the Right Thing," had a boom box, and he thought that was something "people could get into." He forgot that Lee was black and he was white—and what a difference that made as far as people getting into something were concerned. Corey never thought about it at all. Corey agreed cheerfully with everyone who liked his statue, even the people who liked it *because* it was "negative." He agreed with the woman who showed up at the triangle the day the statues came down—she was a black woman, from the neighborhood—and said, "Don't take these down, you're taking *us* down. A lot of kids are dying because of these symbols. . . . We got to get ourselves together." He agreed with the old black man who said, "I admire these statues every time I pass by," and with the Hispanic guy who said, "How can this be negative? This is the Bronx!" He stood at the site and took the compliments he got, and argued with the woman who looked at the statues and said that his radio and Raymond's dog were "an affirmation of everything they"—white people—"think we are." He argued with the man who stopped in his tracks and said, "A killer dog? A basketball? A radio? Anybody can get a radio and make a lot of noise." He argued with the woman who would have preferred a statue of Aurelia Green, the South Bronx assemblywoman—because from what he knew Aurelia Green had just appropriated a baby grand piano from the local school board and moved it into her living room, and, by comparison with Green, Corey considered himself a model citizen. Corey looked at his statue on its pedestal in front of the 44th Precinct and said, "I like it. To tell you the truth, this is me, always cool. My kids are gonna tell their kids, 'That's your grandpa.' 'Cause all that hard work, look what it comes to—something to appreciate."

JOHN AHEARN grew up in Binghamton. His father delivers the Binghamton babies and votes Republican and occasionally retreats to a Catskill lodge with his fly-fishing rod and his hunting rifle and, when he can persuade them, John and his twin brother, Charlie, who is a video artist in Tribeca. Eight years ago, when John was courting a South Bronx girl—he was going to marry into the neighborhood, he says, and have South Bronx babies, and "belong" that way—he bought a ring and drove his girlfriend to the lodge to meet his parents. The engagement was over that weekend. John was thirty-three then, and settled in the neighborhood. "There was this idea, fixating in my mind, about being this mythical creature in the Bronx—like Rivera in Mexico," he says. "The idea was to become what I was going to become *here*—marrying here, becoming a real person." It was not an idea that sat well with the young filmmaker he was courting downtown. He was, by his own account, "into salvation, but I guess you could say commitment was my problem." It would be more accurate to say that too many commitments was his problem. He stepped right into his enthusiasms and made them his life. John went to Cornell, like his father, but he did not join Sigma Nu or row on the crew team or learn the Ithaca drinking songs, the way his father had. He discovered art. He shaved his head, and bought a woollen hat and an outsized thrift-shop coat and a rope to tie the coat, and moved to a commune in town and thought he was part of a fantastic revolution—"all mixed up with masochism, Catholicism, drugs, and Vincent van Gogh." The people who counted in his life right then were his brother, Charlie, who was studying art at Colgate ("Twins hum together in the same place" is how John puts it), and a Binghamton psychic who lived next door to his old scoutmaster at home. They met at a Boy Scout troop reunion, on Christmas break his freshman year, and before John knew it the psychic was in a trance and he and Charlie were sitting beside her, "like her angels," drawing pictures, and it had been "established" that John was going to be an artist. "I was hit by the thunderbolt of art," he says. "No one can tell me now not to believe things."

John started painting a picture every day. He would put on his overcoat and stand in the snow in the middle of Ithaca with his paint box and hitchhike. His "discipline" then was to stay wherever he was driven and paint whatever it was he saw—cows, trees, houses, or just more snow. He keeps three school canvases rolled up in his bedroom in the South Bronx. He has a sentimental attachment to them—to the nineteenth-century world he made of twentieth-century Ithaca, to the daubs of color he discovered in those January storms. He thought that by freezing his fingers, painting outside in northern New York State in the middle of January, he was suffering for art, the way van Gogh had suffered. He is interested in suffering—in trial and penance and confession. It is another one of his enthusiasms—"religion and art at the same time," he says. It accounts for the time he spends at early Mass at Father Hennessy's church—"the Mass with the hard core, where everybody's wired"—and for the way he refers to the priest as "Monsignor" and says that "he's my age, but really wise, like I'm the kid and he's the adult." It does not have much to do with the Catholicism he learned from the nuns at a Binghamton day school, or from his Uncle Jack, who used to refer to John XXIII as "Satan himself walking the halls of the Vatican," but his friends think it has a lot to do with his twelve years in the South Bronx, among the

"The woman at this end is my current ex-wife."

poor. Some of them say that John could easily have been a priest himself.

JOHN started making life casts in 1979, when he was twenty-seven and working in Manhattan with an artists' collective called Colab. The collective was "radical and into street art and video art"; it sent him all over the city with a Super 8 for its ongoing alternative newsreel, "All Color News." John had pretty much stopped painting, because Colab was "anti-painting," and the closest he got to sculpture then was knocking out windows on the five-dollar-an-hour construction jobs that paid his rent. The only casts he knew anything about in those days were a collection of life casts that his friend Tom Otterness was fixing for the Museum of Natural History. John was storing the casts for Otterness, but one day he got curious and unwrapped them, and then he videotaped them, and *then* he started wondering how to make them. He discovered a book called "Makeup for Theater, Film and Television," with a chapter on making cosmeticians' masks and molds, and he called up the artists he knew and practiced on them. He made casts of Otterness and Coleen Fitzgibbon and Robin Winters and Kiki Smith, and thought it was terrific—being a ham, having an audience, hanging your friends on the wall when they went home. His brother, Charlie, thought it was "too safe, too SoHo, too much party and not enough risk." So John went to the South Bronx—to a funky storefront "alternative art space" called Fashion Moda, which was as far from SoHo as either of them could imagine. It was twelve hundred square feet of Bronx exotica where Jenny Holzer practiced graffiti with Lady Pink, from the subway, and the Satanist Sisters, from a methadone clinic across the street, made drawings with their blood. John set up shop on the sidewalk. He cast addicts and transvestites who wandered over from the clinic. At the beginning, they were the only people he met who were crazy enough or stoned enough, or even vain enough, to volunteer. He would cast all day, and at night he would head home to Tenth Street on the IND with a piece of steaming plaster on his lap—"sometimes two, like twins, one on each knee"—and later he would hang it up at Fashion Moda and get down with the reactions. "It was like getting back to art," he says. "To paint and plaster. It was fun. It was catastrophic, I knew immediately it was great."

MAILBOX

To the Editor:

In Richard Brookhiser's review "Ghost in the Machine" (November 9th) he writes of "a kid bouncing a spaldeen off a wall of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts." What exactly does that action entail?

JOSEPH PAGANO
Monterey, Calif.

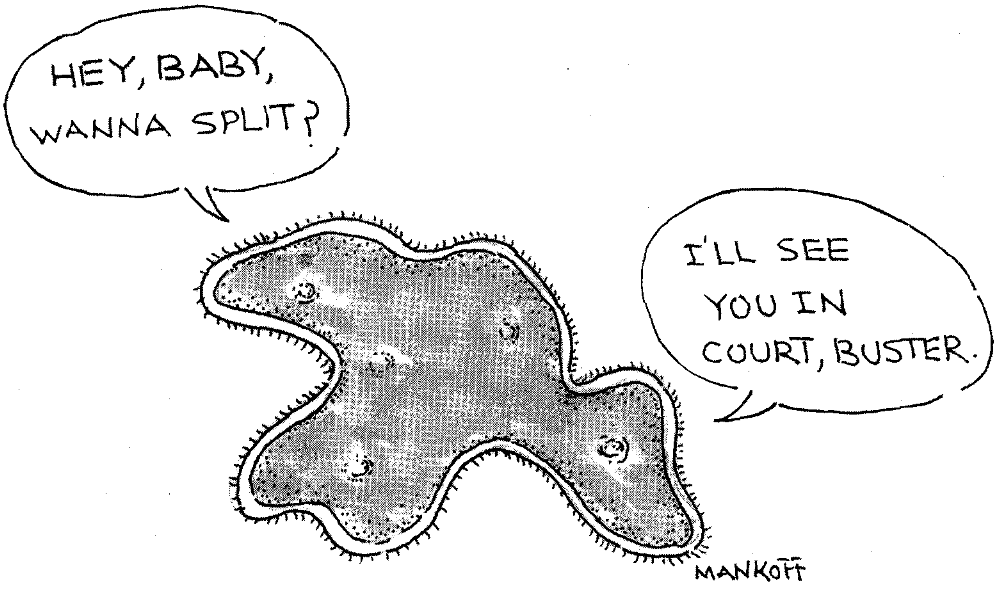
Spaldeens are the small rubber balls beloved by generations of New York stoopball and stickball players. In Boston, these balls are often known as "pinkies," but what would you have thought if we had written "bouncing a pinky off a wall"?

THE EDITORS

When John had been in the Bronx five months, a Walton Avenue kid by the name of Rigoberto Torres showed up at Fashion Moda, and asked him a lot of questions, and in the end asked to help him. Rigoberto was eighteen and still in high school. He worked sometimes washing dishes in a rice-and-beans shop, and sometimes making pizza downtown, and sometimes polishing rings for a Forty-seventh Street jeweller, but the job he liked was casting and painting at Uncle Raul's statuary factory, making the St. Lazaros and Venus de Milos and Elvises and Buddhas and Santa Clauses and Sitting Bulls and Nefertitis that Raul Arce supplied to the South Bronx botanicas. Rigoberto had heard about John from a couple of cousins who owned a cab; they came home one night with a story about a white guy who was out on the sidewalk on 147th Street making casts like Uncle Raul's casts, only the people were real.

Robert (his mother calls Rigoberto Robert, and that is the name he likes) went to work as John's assistant, then as his partner. He has helped John cast for the past twelve years. Most of the work that people in the South Bronx see is work that he and John cast together and John painted, but Robert makes his own casts, too, and they are very different from John's. "Robert has nothing to do with art history" is the way their dealer puts it. His painting is simple, cheerful, and direct—the critics say "literal, anecdotal, uninflected"—and has a kind of circus-poster strong-man feeling, because Robert is not interested in "ambiguous" characters. He has known ambiguous characters all his life, and he doesn't find them interesting or exotic. What Robert finds exotic, in the South Bronx, is kindly, peaceful people. "My way of doing it is, I got to have some happiness" is how he describes the casts he paints, on his own. He says that John "opened my life, but maybe it went too fast," because John was a white man, with a downtown attraction for Bronx lost souls. "John knew something I didn't want to know anymore," Robert says, "and sometimes he left me feeling like a shadow."

John says that Robert opened *his* life. When he introduces Robert to a friend, he always says, "This is Robert, the key person." It was Robert who introduced him to the Bronx, Robert who was his Spanish voice and his Spanish credentials, Robert who took him home to Walton Avenue and made him family and after a while—"Robert has the right pacing," John says—suggested that John might like to move to Walton Avenue, too. It was the summer of 1980. John and Robert had been in a Times Square group show that was making a lot of young artists famous (Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring among them), and John had sold his first cast after the show, and got invited to shows in London and Cologne, and it convinced him that he was right about the Bronx and about the casts and about his friendship with Rigoberto Torres. He believed that with Robert he was "part of what was happening in the Bronx, part of the integrity of the neighborhood, and solidly at home." He rented the apartment where he lives now. Robert lived in the building, with his parents. Raymond lived in the building across the street, and Corey lived in the building next door. John likes to say that once he knew Raymond and Corey he had three-quarters of the block covered, because the block was divided then. Corey's half of the block was black and the half where Raymond and Robert lived was Puerto Rican, and there was always some fighting—though the neighbors say that any *serious* fighting "came from outside the block," that the only block problems *they* remember were at the block party, when the black half of the block had better music, and drew the crowds, and the Puerto Ricans on the block got mad. When the neighbors talk about the summer that John moved to Walton Avenue, they talk about "the good days." They mean that 1980 was "before the Dominicans," because Dominicans arrived on the block in the eighties, some of them dealing crack and cocaine for Colombians in Queens, and the neighbors, especially the Puerto Rican neighbors, tend to blame them for everything terrible that has happened since.

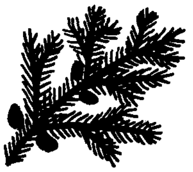

HEY, BABY, WANNA SPLIT?
I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT, BUSTER.
MANKOFF

ASEXUAL HARASSMENT

Walton Avenue is convenient. John has had other studios—he spent two years renovating an old schoolhouse on Bonner Street that was going to be his "ultimate studio," and when he finished the landlord had him evicted—but he still prefers to cast on the sidewalk, in front of two rooms he rents on the ground floor of his own building. He and Robert pass plaster through the windows. They hang their casts out, and the neighbors know they are open for business. Or they turn on the light and pull up the blinds, and announce it that way. School lets out at three in the afternoon on Walton Avenue. John says that it's his "best time." When he hears the bell at P.S. 64, on the next corner, he stops whatever he is doing and heads for the street and sits on the hood of his old white Mercury station wagon and waits to socialize. Everyone uses the street that way—like a club. People who want to find a friend, meet a girl, make a deal, keep an appointment, or simply hang out and be entertained head for the street at three and wait. If it's warm, they wait outside, and if it's cold they wait in somebody's car. John usually comes down with his dog, Summer. He takes the stairway to the roof—the stairway is filthy and smells of urine—and sometimes he stops to look at his mural "Back to School," on a wall across the street from the schoolhouse, and then he crosses the roof and rings for the elevator, which is often broken but not as much as *his* elevator, on the other side of the court, and then he hits the block. He likes to keep up with the neighbors—with Risa, who lives on the third floor and is studying art at Lehman College; with Virginia, the kindergarten assistant, who moved her family a couple of blocks away, to "another worse place," and comes home to the building every day to see her mother; to Mimi, who was one of John's first Walton Avenue kids and now, ten years later, has a daughter of her own and a husband ("but a Dominican") so devoted that he replaces her Honda every six months. Sometimes Raymond joins John. He waits, smoking cigarette butts and standing a little apart, until John is finished talking, and then *they* talk. If the conversation is long, he wanders off. He never says much to the neighborhood women. He knows that the women don't like him.

John tries to park his car in front of his building. The wagon is safe there. It is too old to interest the neighbors, whose car of choice is a brand-new Japanese sedan, a Civic or Maxima or Acura, and too battered to interest the four teen-agers who are apprenticed to a gang of Dominican drug dealers, and who can usually be found together on the sidewalk, leaning against a wall and looking menacing. The boys are fourteen, maybe fifteen, and at the beginning of their training. Their job right now is picking the locks on cars and stealing the radios—and anything else they find—and they are single-minded. They were working the street the day the children at P.S. 64 had their South Bronx history lesson, and learned that Walton Avenue once belonged to a farmer named Lewis Morris, who signed the Declaration of Independence. Their interest in Walton Avenue starts and stops at Walton Avenue's cars. They do not come over to rap with John, on the hood of *his* car, and John avoids them. They are the only kids in the neighborhood he avoids. He says that the kids on the block have a moment, before they get street smart, before they toughen, before the South Bronx claims them—a moment of "delicacy and correctness and trust that is like a flowering, and then it closes." He tries to catch that moment in his casts. "Sometimes I'll miss it," he says. "Or—it's crazy—I go away and a couple of months later it's not there. There's something aflame, and then it's gone, and the next time I see them they're like"—he leans against the wall, like one of the crack apprentices, and lifts his chin in a quick, cocky gesture that is pure South Bronx for "Fuck you!"—"and it's over."

Right now, he's trying not to miss that moment. His last show had some casts of children in pairs—he called it "Face to Face"—and kids in the neighborhood keep stopping by to check on the casts he promised them. Corey’s sister, Veronica, wants her foot cast. Her friend wants a finger. Princess, who is nine, didn’t like the color of her face when John first cast her. She liked the yellow of her grammar-school graduation robe, but she didn’t like the “slashes” of paint on her face. They were very impressionistic, John said, “full of light, nuance, and color tone, and very flattering.” Princess said “blotchy.” She wanted a light face—a “one-color face”—and, for all John knew, she would have been just as testy in the hands of the artist who mixes primary colors in ice-cube trays and calls them “skin-color pieces.” John had to admit that Raymond had been right when he saw “Princess” and said, “She won’t like that, they don’t like dark here.” Princess is now a flat, light, orangy-brown—it was the color she chose—and her only complaint is that John forgot to cast her earrings. John, who says that with Princess he found he could express himself “without the yellows, the greens, and the purples,” still talks about her as “the fish that got away,” and he worries because Bashira, who has “eyes like wells and a deep quality to his face, like Nelson Mandela,” now wants *his* graduation cast to be “one color, like Princess, and not too dark.” Bashira stopped by the studio the other day and saw the cast and said, “I look like one of those African pictures.” He wants to look “American.” “You know, not muddy, like an old Zulu,” he says. In a couple of days, he will collect his cast, and John will replace it on the wall, and the people who stop to rap at three in the afternoon will poke their heads through the studio window to see who’s hanging on the wall now. There are a couple of casts John never changes: Kevin Crocker, for example, who lives in the building and helps John out in the studio. (He is, in fact, the only person besides John and Robert who has a key.) Kevin wears a high flattop, and dresses in loopy clothes, and sports a medallion with a picture of Malcolm X and a machine gun on it, but he is sweet-tempered and very shy, and John says he has “perfect pitch in his character, he’s never off balance.” When Uncle Raul was zipping through the neighborhood in his Cadillac and knocked Kevin off his bicycle, Kevin smiled and said, “No problem.” Kevin grew up on the block, and a lot of the kids he knows are in jail now. John says that when you ask after them their mothers will tell you, “Oh, he’s doing well, getting along with the guards”—as if they were in college. Their mothers are relieved to have them in jail, because on the street they could be killed. It takes a lot of “pitch” in your character to survive Walton Avenue, or a kind of genius.



IT was on April 1, 1986, that the Percent for Art Program of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs convened a panel of art experts and “concerned parties” to choose an artist for the 44th Precinct police station. Bess Myerson was the commissioner then, and the program director was a young art consultant named Jennifer MacGregor Cutting, who had been at Cultural Affairs when the program started, in 1983. In those days, most people in the arts in New York thought of the program as a gift from the city to the city—or, more specifically, a gift from a woman named Doris Freedman to the city, since it was Mrs. Freedman, at the Municipal Arts Society and the Public Art Fund, who had persuaded the mayor that public art was important, and that, given the boondoggles and the graft involved in most city projects, there was surely some money available somewhere to make New York what in those optimistic days was called “a museum without walls.” The terms of the arrangement were that one per cent of the budget for every new public construction project in the city be set aside for an art work, with the proviso that no single commission cost more than four hundred thousand dollars, and that the program’s yearly commissions stop at a million and a half.

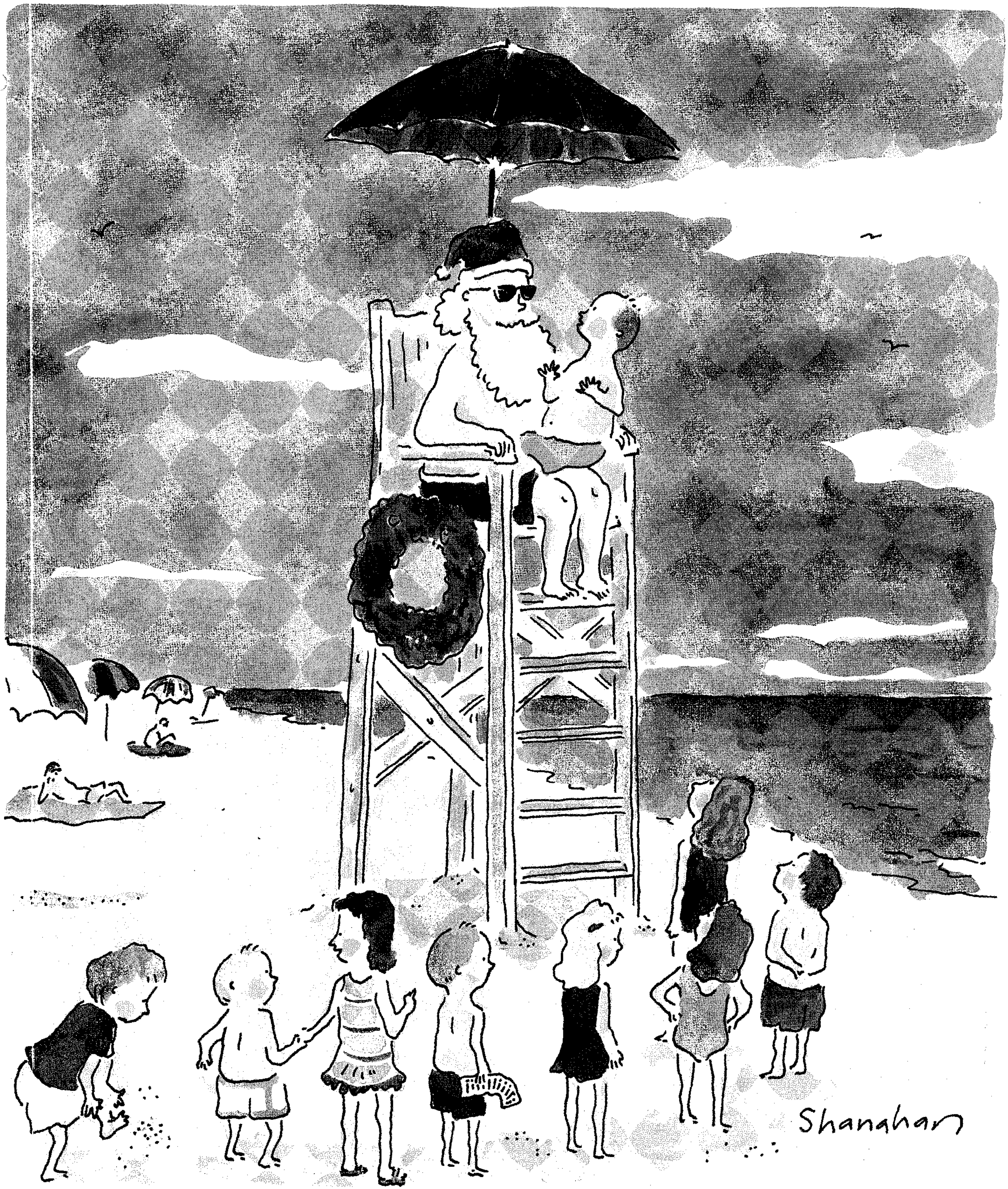
It sounded simple. No one in the art world then was talking about “controlling the images,” and no one objected to Jennifer Cutting’s panel on the 44th Precinct, which included an artist, an architect, a deputy commissioner from Cultural Affairs, a design director from the Department of General Services, which was building the police station, a captain from the precinct, and the chief curator of the Bronx Museum. The precinct architect came to the meeting. So did a couple of people from the Art Commission, the Department of City Planning, and the Mayor’s Office of Construction, and four “advisers”—from the Public Art Fund, the precinct, the Borough President’s office, and the office of the City Council president. They looked at slides of work by twenty-nine artists, which Cutting and her staff had culled from files on two thousand local artists. Some of the artists were white, but there were also black artists and Hispanic artists and Asian artists. No one at the meeting remembers that race was an issue. The neighborhood was an issue, and what each artist could bring to the neighborhood—and everyone was impressed by John Ahearn, who lived in the neighborhood and was well thought of in the neighborhood and did work for the neighborhood that had clearly made the neighborhood “happy.” John was one of fifteen artists the panelists voted to consider, and when they met again, two weeks later (with seventeen more artists added to the list, and four more advisers), John was the artist they chose.

It took three years for John to get his contract—which had to account for everything from site insurance to payment schedules—and a lot happened in the city in those three years. Bess Myerson was caught shoplifting. New York was about to elect its first black mayor. Multiculturalism arrived at Edward Durell Stone’s lollipop marble palace on Columbus Circle, where Cultural Affairs has its offices, and Columbus himself had come to be a loaded word. The new Cultural Affairs commissioner was a black arts administrator named Mary Schmidt Campbell, who had come to the department from the Studio Museum, in Harlem. She appointed a white arts administrator named Linda Blumberg—one of the founders of P.S. 1—as her deputy for public affairs, in charge of the Percent for Art program, and in 1990, when Jennifer Cutting left, Blumberg brought in an artist and curator named Tom Finkelpearl from P.S. 1 to run Percent for Art. It was a good working office for Ahearn. Mary Campbell was enthusiastic. Linda Blumberg was enthusiastic. Tom Finkelpearl, who had worked with John on an installation at P.S. 1 (it was part of a show called “Out of the Studio: Art with Community”), was enthusiastic. No one envisioned any problems with the project. The problems at Percent for Art in 1989 had more to do with black and Latino artists complaining about always

ARTIST AT LARGE

KRINGLE ON THE BEACH

by Danny Shanahan



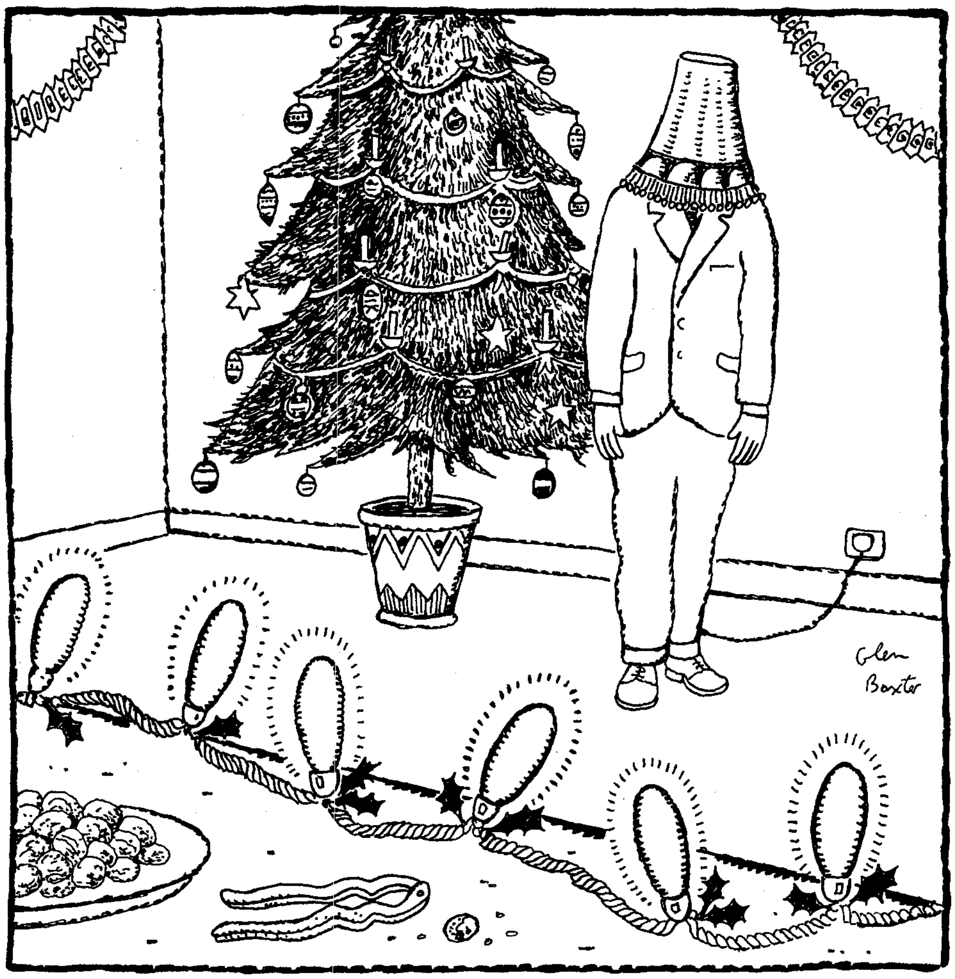
being chosen for projects in their own neighborhoods—and not in Manhattan—than with white artists like John who wanted to work in those neighborhoods. People at the program now say that if there was any mistake in choosing John for the police station it was in not including Rigoberto Torres in the commission, or in John's not insisting that they include him.

Robert and John were having problems of their own by the time John's contract arrived—problems of partnership. ("We were passing then through a real irritable phase," John says. "I said O.K., and Robert was left out, and my point of view is certainly that not having Robert for the bronzes didn't do me any good at all.") Robert was wondering who he was in the partnership, and whether he was an artist at all or just somebody "always behind John." The problem for Robert was that the people who bought art—the museums, the collectors—wanted a John Ahearn, the way the people at Percent for Art wanted a John Ahearn. They did not want a John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres, or a John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres. John's was the name they knew. When they looked at a piece by John and Robert, they wanted to be told that John painted it, and *then* they bought. Robert was thinking about leaving Walton Avenue, and moving to his family village in Puerto Rico and casting for a while on his own. By the time John's contract was actually signed, and he started working, Robert *was* in Puerto Rico. No one knows what would have happened if Robert had stayed home: if people would have reacted differently to bronzes signed "Ahearn and Torres"; if blacks who said that they could get down with Radio Raheem but that Corey was a "fat, racist stereotype" would have been "happy"; if John would still have been the artist everybody blamed.

John didn't want to decorate the police station with a mural or a wall, which was what the precinct wanted. He says that when he heard about the project he thought, Wow, this is a thorny gift! He didn't really feel comfortable having anything to do with a police station, especially in a place like the South Bronx, where the line between the police and the people was so implacably drawn. He didn't think that images of the neighbors and their policemen together on a wall would do much to mend relations; he thought they would call up ironies that the neighborhood, and maybe even the police, would find hard to appreciate. He thought of the triangle—it was a dead space then, a strip of white-lined asphalt at the intersection of Jerome, Gerard, and 169th Street, in front of the station—as a no man's land that could become an everyman's land, where those relations would lose some of their old tension. He asked for the space early on—Jennifer Cutting spent two years negotiating with the Department of Transportation to get it, and then to get the money to construct it, and John eventually went to work with a landscape architect from General Services to design it. He was pleased with the architect, a young woman named Nancy Owens, who was married to an artist herself.

His first idea was to organize a huge neighborhood casting—something on the order of the castings he and Robert used to have on Walton Avenue during the summer block parties—and end up with a lot of concrete figures on the triangle. He thought of Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha, and a lot of other Walton Avenue characters, new characters. He wanted a crowd, and variety, and surprises, but the city was against concrete—the official wisdom was that anything concrete would be defaced and damaged, if not destroyed—and bronze was too expensive for a crowd. John's budget was just enough for three or four bronze pieces, and there wasn't really time for a neighborhood casting, or "surprises," anyway, because once the contract was signed the city wanted John's project designs within a few months.

It was then that John started thinking about the Paseo de la Reforma, with its bronze heroes,



AS CHRISTMAS LOOMED EVER NEARER, ANTHONY MADE THE USUAL PREPARATIONS.

and wondering what would happen if people saw Raymond Garcia cast in bronze and up on a pedestal—if they would see Raymond in a new way, and maybe even see his pit bull, Toby, in a new way. He thought that maybe Toby could guard the entrance to the South Bronx the way the stone lions on Fifth Avenue guarded the Public Library, and he was sure his instincts were right, because everyone in the neighborhood had liked the fibreglass cast of Raymond and Toby he was planning to use. Corey, who had been waiting, in fibreglass, since 1988, was going to "balance" Raymond in the installation, and Daleesha, he thought, would be roller-skating on a pedestal between them.

Daleesha did not exactly belong to the block, because nobody on the block exactly claimed her. She came from a troubled family, and lived with whatever cousin or aunt was able to keep her, and dropped into whatever school was convenient. Daleesha was sassy and sly, and desperate for roller skates. John saw her skating down Walton Avenue one day on a borrowed pair and thought she looked terrific ("like she was growing in front of you"), with her skinny long legs and her stuck-up chin and her funky topknot and her South Bronx attitude. He says, "It was a great image, if you treated it with respect. It was all about youth, energy, physical aggressiveness—about putting on skates and suddenly being four inches taller." He liked it so much, in fact, that he wanted to duplicate it. He wanted two girls skating together—Daleesha, who is black, and a Hispanic girl about the same age. He thought there would be a nice irony about those pieces, because it was kids like that—not college kids but street kids—that the police of the 44th Precinct were likely to meet. Both girls gave him trouble. They weren't interested in getting a plaster cast for themselves, or in seeing themselves on pedestals, or even in being famous. Art and John Ahearn didn't interest them at all. They had one thing in mind—new roller skates—and that was what John promised them if they were cast. The Hispanic girl couldn't wait; she got "negative," John says, by which he means that she never showed up for the casting. Daleesha waited, and got her skates, and then she disappeared. She never came to the installation or saw the bronze "Daleesha" up on its pedestal. John thought for a while that she had died.

"Frank, I want you to try antidepressants."

RAYMOND GARCIA had just come home from a prison boat in New York Harbor, and he did not want any more attention from policemen than he already had. He wanted to see his dog "immortalized in a nice river place, with trees"—somewhere peaceful and clean and, especially, "not the Bronx." He said, "When you do a lot of injustice, people don't forget you." And he was right. The local cops see him now and call out, "Yo, Mr. Statue! Mr. Statue, you haven't paid us a visit lately!" One of his cousins has a court order forbidding him to enter her house. Even Robert, who used to worry about Raymond, says "I'm out of here" whenever Raymond sits down. But not John. John believes in Raymond. He's drawn to "weirdos and crazies and prickly, unpredictable characters like Raymond"—characters who move him and scare him at the same time. He refused to give up on Raymond when Raymond freaked out and called the police and announced that he had dumped John in the Hudson River, and even when Raymond set him up and Raymond's friends came over and robbed the apartment, and he is not about to give up on Raymond now, when Raymond is sick and alone and often has nowhere to sleep but an abandoned apartment building around the corner. The building is dangerous. Raymond says that more people get killed in a week in abandoned buildings in the Bronx than in some American cities (though he claims there is a kind of "tranquillity" about *his* building, because the cops are too frightened to come in and clear it). Raymond sleeps there in a sleeping bag on the floor, and he eats "in my coat by candlelight"—which is his way of saying that there is no heat and no electricity—and whenever he feels like company he visits a "college guy" who moved into a room upstairs with a pile of books, and who impresses Raymond by sweeping every day. John worries when Raymond stays in the building—he worries that someone will steal his sleeping bag and Raymond will freeze—but Raymond has made it clear to the addicts and dealers and derelicts on the floor that "I'll kick down your door and take what's mine if you come near me."

The truth is that Raymond has a new pit bull to protect him. The dog belongs to his cousin June Bug Garcia, who lives on the block and occasionally leaves him food, but it's Raymond who walks the dog, and Raymond who loves it, and Raymond who named it Sakura, which he says is "Morning Blossom Flower" in Japanese. Raymond says that Sakura is "just as smart, just as tender" as Toby, and he doesn't seem to notice the mothers, at their windows, yelling to their children to cross the street when he is on the block walking Sakura, or the fathers running out to snatch the children away. Right now the block looks wonderful to Raymond, and he doesn't want to lose it. He talks about the block parties, "with John and Robert doing art, and there ain't no complaints, there ain't nobody saying, 'Hey, you're standing on my shoulder!' Put folks in the welfare line, it's black against Hispanic. Not *here.* This community, it's peaceful and quiet." He tries to supply the block with useful news—news that the price of bulletproof vests is rising, or that one of the local politicians is "more evil than a pit bull," or that the Taft High School, two blocks east, where one new neighbor wants to send her daughter, is known by its graduates as Training Animals for Tomorrow, or that the crack dealer across the street "died a horrible death, from grease around the heart," or that the super in John's building has been charging five dollars to turn the elevator on.

Raymond is close to being the local vet. He got his training stitching Toby after pit fights. He says that he put Toby in the pit because "this is the Bronx, and if your dog can't defend himself, how's he going to defend *you?*" and that after a while he and Toby had "the Bronx reputation," and people were paying him to pick their dogs and stitch them, too. Toby had arrived on the block in a bowling bag of stolen Texas pit bulls. He was the puppy that tried to bite Raymond when he put his hand in the bag. Raymond said to himself, "That's the one I want. He's the smallest, the youngest, he got no time to sleep, he got to fight his way to the bowl." Toby, in his day, won some serious fights, and "took some serious ass kicking." Then he lost his longest fight, and after five and a half hours of sewing up the holes Raymond decided it was time for Toby to "retire." "His fighting days were over, and I was running crazy in the streets, and I didn't want to drag him down," Raymond says now. He tried giving Toby to a boy in the neighborhood—Toby liked children. But grownups "upset" him, and he wouldn't let the boy's parents out of their bedroom, and Raymond had to take him back. "The father was happy to see me" is how he describes it. Three years ago, Toby "passed away from chicken bones in the kidney," and Raymond thinks it was just as well, because three years ago Raymond was usually in jail.

RASCASSE

I

In off-season chill, berthed yachts are spiking stems
into the plum-colored evening of the harbor
outside the door. We attend our first authentic
bouillabaisse in Nice. On each table, *azur*
as the morning sea, a delicate white bouquet.
"What is that flower?" I ask the bowing blacktie,
his answer so startling I hear the English "I."
"*Pardon? ... oh, ail. Vraiment? C'est charmant ici!*"
But we have not come for charm and blossom, but homeliness,
the deep, loamy musk of birth and decay
that hides from the eyes, the head of the garlic, the seed.

On the table rolled to ours a flat pan holds
the posed trio under a fiery arbor
of crabs, tails to a blue-black coil of conger.
On either side, like bridesmaids, the symmetry,
grace, sea-molded curves of mullet and loup;
in the center, the bride ("A first-class bouillabaisse
owes its quality to the *rascasse,* which is
essential"), *rascasse,* the hog-fish, known to folk
and fishermen as the ugliest fish in the world.
Round, lovely eyes of her finny attendants
are blind to the rope of grotesque neck
that lifts a snouted face to her clan of lovers.

The surgeon-waiter bones with a click, click, click.
Over the flesh, divided and dealt, is poured
the broth of all, most prized for that one essence.

II

The eyes have led us astray through dreaming years,
cherishing consonance, curve, the colorful,
proportion, radiance, balance, harmony,

He was convicted first for knifing someone in a fight, and then for possession of cocaine, and once he was held on suspicion of murder, and by the time his dog died he could tell you all about life on Rikers Island, and how it compared to life on the prison boat or at the federal prison "camp" near the Canadian border. His opinion of prison is that "the people will do anything to keep you from leaving." He likes to talk about the Colombian dealer who kept a razor blade in his rectum, and about the Jamaican dealer with thirty razor blades hidden in his dreads, and about the dealer who was so dangerous that the agents who came to move him had to chain him by the legs and shoulders and handcuff him to weight-lifting belts from the prison gym. He stands on the street, or sits in a Chinese-Cuban place on the corner of 170th and Walton, where John (who leaves a big tip whenever Raymond is with him) sometimes takes him for a meal, and where the corner hawker peddles wilted roses, and tells his gruesome stories. He says that "for sure" his life would have been different if he hadn't lost his one job, which was cleaning schools. He recites those schools like a litany. Sometimes he says, "Help me!"

shapeliness that ages etched on our lenses.
We wed and bed the by-product but spurn the essence.

We see the skin of the earth and it is beautiful,
but what formless fury fills earth's bowels and fuels us?
From Tennyson's "fire in the belly" sprang up poems.
Do the eyes want to look in the gut and know its essence?
From what came comfort of home, came fountain and spire?
From the mess of feeling, Yeats' "foul rag-and-bone shop."
What fertilizes but muck? What began us but slime?
We nod to the *jolie-laide* with her troublesome half-truth,
but what gives comfort, what creates, but ugliness?

III

Suppose the light of the eyes went out and we walk
at a strange, cold moon's insistence into a place
bleached of curve, custom, and color, down ways
of misty shapelessness. We walk for days
(or nights). The world, if it is a world, is empty.
No shadow befriends us, our soles press spongy silence.
Finally on some street (or field or shore)
we come to an ugly house and enter. There
we feel, and smell the stench of, some boggy burning.
We kneel at the edge of it and hold out our hands.
Then slowly a center inside us begins to glow
through loops, knots, clumps, from head to toe,
dusky alleys, wires, bags, stems,
and rosy comfort flowers through every pore
into inconceivable gardens. Light flares on our lessons.
We have knelt at the unpraised heart of being, of essence.

IV

The rich broth of life, whose bubble eyes
hold both the unseen and the seen, will defend it—
essence, ugliness (eh, *rascasse*?), comfort.
May all the color and beauty of the world attend it!

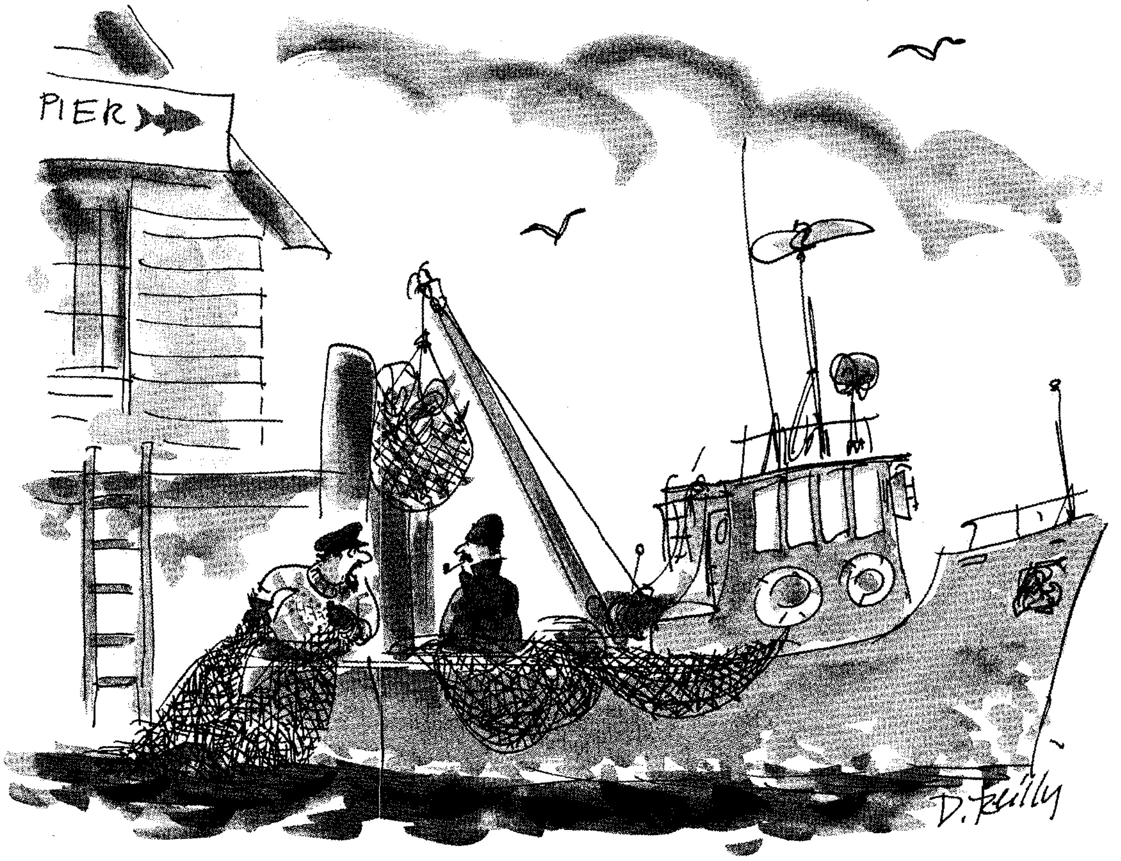
—Mona Van Duyn

He is intelligent, and sensitive, and he knows he might have made something of his life. Cleaning schools was the closest to having a future that he ever came. "It was my mom or my job," he says, because his mother was sick then. There was no one else to collect his brother Edwin at school, so Raymond "took ten minutes" and that was the end of his career. "Since my mother was sick, I got a record *this* long," he likes to say, stretching out his arms. "I wanted to hurt people, hurt myself. It's hard to describe if you haven't gone through it. It's not like a book. A book can tell you a story, and you can feel it—feel the pain. But a book can tell that story twelve ways, and reality's different. Reality's like a statue. It goes in one direction."

There is AIDS in Raymond's family. Edwin died young—he was retarded—and then a lot of other people in the family died. Raymond has a brother in California "who engages in illegal activities, like me." The only brother left on Walton Avenue is dying now. His name is Freddy, and everybody on the block likes him. John likes Freddy—Freddy gives him haircuts—and Raymond worships Freddy. He says, "Freddy took away all my violence. Freddy's everything I'm not. I wake up just glad I survived, but Freddy wakes up and says, 'Hi, how you doing?' He's glad to be alive. Freddy's gentle and has twenty suits, and all *I* got is the clothes on my back and my conscience. When Freddy dies, I die."

The cops on Walton Avenue never shout "Yo, Mr. Statue!" to Corey Mann. They don't recognize Corey on the street, because Corey, on the street, is (as John puts it) "pretty fresh." Corey is given to handmade bomber jackets, and sharp new suits with "Corey" emblazoned on the back, and a lot of gold and diamonds, and the Corey the cops know from the traffic triangle didn't have a fancy jacket, or a shirt that said "Just Add Bacardi to Lemonade," or a set of rings that spelled out "Corey" in diamonds across the knuckles of his right hand. The Corey they know had a boom box, not a black Buick Regal with Camaro chrome from "a guy in a truck," and, as for the basketball, when the cops at the site said, "Look at this guy, he's got no shirt on, and he's not even playing," Robert asked them "How do you play basketball in a three-piece suit?" and Raymond said, "Maybe Corey's checking out the team, for the next game." Corey has a low opinion of policemen. He says, "They're all nasty, you understand me? And some of the white ones are outrageous. But the ones I say hello to, they white. The ones that's black, like me, or Puerto Rican, they got to prove something. They got attitude. They got a gun, a badge. They say, 'You low-life nigger, get a life!' But I say, 'We all bleed, we all got face and fingers, we all gonna die. You got too much attitude. Tomorrow's not promised just to *you.*' "

Corey has attitude himself. He is under the protection of an enormous gold Madonna, which he wears on a gold chain—he says she is not a Madonna at all but "Santa Barbara, who was a caring person, a sweet person, like she show no hostility"—and he is going to reward her one day soon by putting diamonds on her halo and rubies on her baby's halo. Nobody really knows where Corey gets his money. He joined the hospital workers' union this year, and he says he has a job in the pathology lab at Mount Sinai, but this fall the only job he had was answering the telephone at Call a Date and "telling the women what they want to hear." It wasn't a bad business. Five minutes on the phone with Corey at Call a Date cost fifty dollars, and Corey



"My father had a saying: 'If you sell a man a fish, you'll make a good living; if you teach a man to fish, you're stupid.' "

got nine of them. His only complaint was that he couldn't talk like a woman, too—which some of the men there could—because those men could pick up any call, and they got paid more. "The job was, I got to keep you on the phone" is how Corey describes the work. He says that, being a Scorpio, he had a natural talent for it, and he may be right, since, at twenty-four, he has had several devoted girlfriends, four children, and "a little thing" with a woman of forty. John worries sometimes about the children being "ghetto bastards"—he says that Corey's arrangements remind him of the song about ghetto bastards by Naughty by Nature, which John considers the "No. 1 rap group"—but Corey thinks of himself as a family man, "only with more families than most." What makes him a family man, in his opinion, is that he lives at home, on Walton Avenue, and sees to it that nobody like Corey Mann comes near his sisters. Corey has always considered himself a guardian of the block, and of "virtue" on the block, and, as far as he is concerned, the only reason the people on Jerome Avenue didn't acknowledge him as *their* guardian is that they never had the pleasure of getting to know him. "George Washington, two lions—if they don't know you they won't like you, right or wrong?"

When John and Robert are casting one of the block kids and want a hand—someone to make the carrot juice or someone to tell tall stories and make the kids laugh, so they don't get nervous—they leave word up and down the block and hope Corey will appear. John says that Corey was "very instrumental" with Daleesha. Corey describes it this way: "She's very fussy, you understand? She wants a banana. You buy the banana. She doesn't eat it." John has a rule about casting children: Never alone. ("You got to touch a little girl, you don't want a 'he say, she say' later," Corey says.) He tries to get a parent or an older brother or sister to be there, but he couldn't find any of Daleesha's relatives, so Corey "stood in." He stood in with his cousin Kenyatta—a nine-year-old with a mop of dreadlocks—when John cast Kenyatta, and he says, "I'm glad I was there, 'cause one time the plaster stick to the little hairs on his leg, and there's a little pinch, it psychs him up. He goes 'Aaagh!,' like we was hitting him with hot irons—like we was *killing* him. And I'm thinking, If the family hear that scream . . . You understand me?"

Corey considers himself a kind of art expert, because John and Robert have cast him five times. John likes his hair, which is short, with laser stripes shaved into it in dapper patterns, and he likes the big space between Corey's front teeth, and the fact that Corey keeps his favorite cast on his living-room wall, above the mantelpiece and right next to the "art" photograph of a rose and Corey's face reflected in a glass of champagne. Corey has been living on Walton Avenue since he was five years old and his grandmother brought him north from South Carolina to meet his father, who was just back from Vietnam. His father never really recovered from the war; his mother was sick with lupus, which left her gaunt and bald and her skin in the patches you see on John's cast "Veronica and Her Mother." The *Times* once used it to illustrate a story about the poor.

Corey claims he was always happiest in South Carolina, which was "straight country, all hogs and cows," but he managed to cover New York. He went to school on the block, and finished at Samuel Gompers High School, and found odd jobs for himself—there was a parking lot in Harlem, and a McDonald's in the Village, and a construction crew at the top of Central Park, and a "jeans boutique" in the South Bronx—and that's why it hurt him, he says, when the bronzes came down. "The cops, they wanted to know 'What are these derelicts, these three black hoodlums, doing here?' and there was this old black man wanted to know

'Who're them? They ain't nobody special.' It hurt me. 'Cause the rough guys—they dead or in jail, and that's not Corey. Everybody here watch me grow up. They know I'm a kind-hearted person. I always admired John, you understand? He's lived here for so long, and we all love him and enjoy him, but you know what I'm saying, he's a very caring, understanding person, and a lot of people kind of try to take advantage. Like John's working on a cast, and he messes up a little old T-shirt, and they say thirty dollars to replace it. I don't take with that. I don't let nobody disrespect him. I don't let the kids say 'Hey, Beanhead,' like they do with some people on the block. This is *my* block. I say, 'If you want to be down with the crowd, stick that needle in your arm—go three blocks down. If you're selling here, me and a couple of guys, we'll have a little talk with you. If you mess with John Ahearn and his art, I'll personally have a little talk with you.' "

JOHN spent 1990 making the rounds with a maquette of Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha. He showed it to review boards at the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of General Services, the Police Department, the City Council, the Office of Management and Budget, the Mayor's office, and a couple of other places, whose names he forgets. He went to the Art Commission for approval—the people there were interested mainly in the paint he was planning to use on the bronzes, which they said were "very forceful"—and, finally, to an open meeting of Bronx Community Board Four, where everyone wanted to meet "the artist with the walls" and the only complaint came from a policeman who thought that a bronze policeman would have been nicer. John went home from the meeting with "community" approval—though it is probably accurate to say that a community board of thirty-five people appointed by their borough president is no more and no less "the community" than a block on Walton Avenue is the community. The local district manager is an old white pol from the old white Bronx named Herbert Samuels. He says now that when he saw John's maquette he thought, Oh God, are we in trouble! But that wasn't what he or anybody else told John. All the people on Community Board Four are blacks and Hispanics, and what *they* said was "Hey, so you're the guy from Walton Avenue we've been hearing about." They did not often get to meet an artist, or to talk about art. They did not even get to talk about "the gypsy-moth problem," or "the tree-pruning problem," the way people on community boards in places like Staten Island do. The agenda at meetings in the South Bronx is usually drugs and homicides, and John's visit was a distraction—something in the way of a social call. John gave their meeting a touch of celebrity.

The first real complaints came much later. They started at the Department of General Services, in September last year, less than a week before the bronzes were scheduled to be installed. They did not come from the man who had sat on the 44th Precinct panel at Cultural Affairs, or from the man who had worked with Nancy Owens on the traffic triangle, or from the man who had visited Cavalier Renaissance, in Bridgeport, the foundry where the bronzes were cast. They were not, officially, "official." They came from Arthur Symes, a black architect who had just been hired as the assistant commissioner in charge of design and construction management, and from Claudette LaMelle, a black therapist with a degree in social work, who was the executive assistant to the D.G.S. commissioner. Neither of them knew much about the South Bronx—Claudette LaMelle lived in the North Bronx, and Arthur Symes lived in Manhattan, in Battery Park City—and neither of them had actually seen the bronzes. They had seen some project drawings lying on an office desk—Arthur Symes says that a white project director had called him over and said, "Take a look at this!"—and then some Polaroids of the drawings, and then some Polaroids of the pieces themselves, and they had concluded that "this was not a happy family, this was negative elements." Claudette LaMelle says, "Raymond was definitely not a boy with

"Catnip for everyone."

Lassie." Her view of Raymond was that if Raymond had a picnic on the block not many parents were going to send their children. Her view of Corey, whom she calls "the fat guy"—she says she showed the pictures of Corey to some kids at a day-care center and they said "too fat to be a basketball player"—was that "he's hanging out" and not doing anything useful, for the neighborhood or for himself. Her view of Daleesha was that she was "more like death walking." She didn't like the spiked collar on the dog or the hood on Raymond's sweatshirt, because the city is full of crack dealers in hooded sweatshirts, and she didn't like the fact that the bronzes were "all black, no color, no hair ribbons, no pink, no blue—nothing."

If she had gone to the foundry, she would have seen that Daleesha had white skates and yellow socks, and a big yellow bow in her hair, and red-and-yellow pictures all over her Batman T-shirt, and that Corey had white sneakers and an orange basketball, and that Raymond's dog was brown and white and Raymond's famous sweatshirt was really a deep blue—that the color emerged, layer by layer, in John Ahearn's remarkable brushwork. She was not much interested in John's brushwork, and neither was Arthur Symes. She thought the work was "racist and subjective," and Arthur Symes thought it was "naïve" and said that no serious person in the community, no really sensitive person, would have "put those negative elements on a pedestal."

No one seems to remember who made the first phone call. (As far as the people complaining at D.G.S. were concerned, the 44th Precinct traffic triangle was "a done deal" and they weren't responsible, and it was certainly not a question of censorship.) What Claudette LaMelle remembers is that "the feeling of inappropriateness here" was brought to the attention of the people on Columbus Circle—and this was certainly true, because Linda Blumberg remembers a call to her commissioner "about a work we commissioned that was going up within a week and that was 'outrageously racist,' " and Tom Finkelpearl remembers Linda coming into his office that morning and the two of them sitting there, bewildered and distressed, and talking about what to do. They talked all morning. They talked about how much a part of his community John was, and about trying to "explain" John to the people at D.G.S.—they were sure that if they did those people would understand that the last thing you could say about John Ahearn was that his work was racist. They talked about what would happen if the South Bronx bronzes became a scandal, and about protecting John, and about protecting art from politics. They talked about what would happen if people all over the city started removing the city's statues.

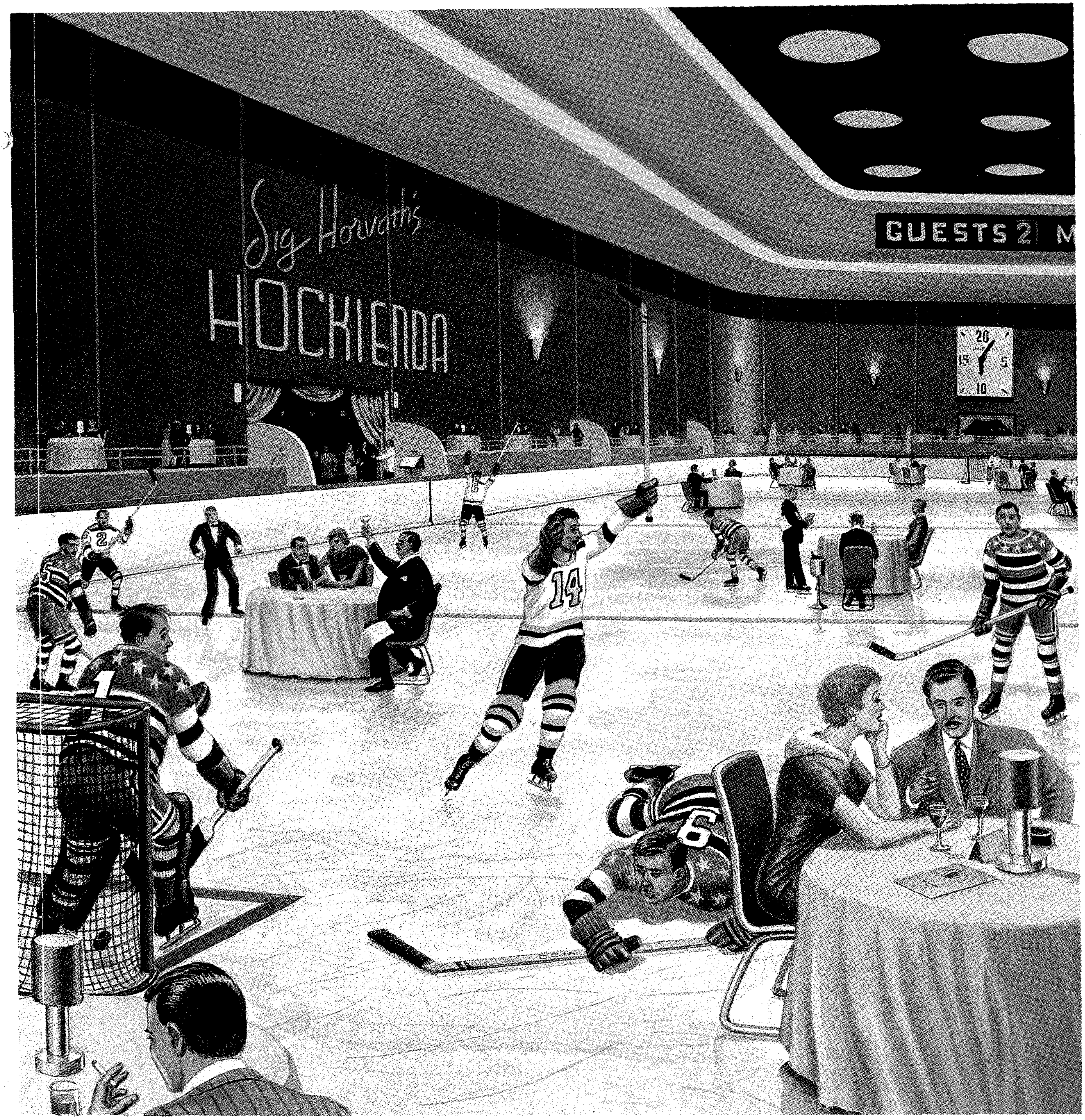
Mary Schmidt Campbell had just left Cultural Affairs for the Tisch School of the Arts, at New York University, and a woman named Charmaine Jefferson was standing in as commissioner until the mayor named someone to replace her. Linda Blumberg went to Mrs. Jefferson with the story—she wanted her to know that John was an artist of integrity, the best artist she could imagine for the project—and then she and Tom went downtown to General Services. They were not prepared for anything like the anger they encountered when they took out their slides and said, "Let's show you this in context." Linda Blumberg had wanted to make a "presentation." She thought that their slides from the South Bronx would help Arthur Symes and Claudette LaMelle "get to know John and his work in the community," but Arthur Symes and Claudette LaMelle were affronted and upset, and they were clearly not interested in a slide show. They wanted the people from Cultural Affairs to accept that the South Bronx bronzes *were* racist—that they didn't represent the struggle of the community or have anything to do with the way that struggle should be represented, that Corey was an outrage, "out of shape and out of work," and Raymond was a drug dealer, and Daleesha was a "zombie." They didn't understand why the people from Cultural Affairs kept talking about "creative freedom" and "artistic freedom." They said later, "Does that mean freedom to do whatever?" And the people from Cultural Affairs didn't understand why *they* were talking about John Ahearn as "a white artist in a Third World community." They knew that John was a member of that community, but Arthur Symes and Claudette LaMelle seemed to be saying what Arthur Symes still believes, a year later: "He's not of the community because he's not black—it's simply that."

Arthur Symes says that when he saw John's project drawings "my first thought was, This guy's not a black artist." He compares John trying to "represent" the South Bronx to himself trying to design a building for Chinatown that would say to the people "That's Chinese!" He doesn't think it's possible, and Claudette LaMelle doesn't think it's possible. Claudette LaMelle says that if John were really part of the community "he would have befriended Raymond much differently"—by which she means he would have spent his time straightening Raymond out instead of wrapping him in plaster. She doesn't credit what Raymond says—that John, wrapping him in plaster, did more to straighten him out than anyone else, anyone *from* the community, ever had.

The meeting was a standoff, though Linda Blumberg says that Arthur Symes, especially, moved her with his arguments. Symes had talked about losing people to drugs and the streets—"He saw John's pieces as monuments to everything he'd been trying to save his own community from"—and Linda knew his sadness was genuine. She left his office "filled with contradictory feelings," and she and Tom went back to *their* office wondering what they should have known or thought or done, wondering what had gone wrong with the "process." They had thought that the process was as fair as it could get: they gave three-quarters of their commissions to minorities; they spread those commissions around to cover all the boroughs and all sorts of neighborhoods. Tom himself had gone out of his way to compensate for the fact that "for every white middle-class artist in SoHo who sends in slides there's a black or Hispanic artist somewhere in Brooklyn or the Bronx who has never heard of us." There were outreach programs at Percent for Art. Linda says that they had done their best

THE NEW YORK SUPPER CLUB HOCKEY LEAGUE 1937-38

by Bruce McCall



THE idea was to buy a book of tickets and do the whole circuit, but nobody much wanted to go out to Tuxedo Park and Locust Valley and Greens Farms on a week night, so the only venue that really drew was Sig Horvath's Hockienda, up on the roof of the old Hotel St. Elmo, on Eighth Avenue. A table at mid-ice was best, because things could get crowded around the nets, but the truth about an evening at the New York Supper Club Hockey League is that it was thrilling only for a period or so. Then the ice spray, the cold seeping up through the soles of your shoes, those big, grunting men all chopping their sticks and cursing away, inches from your face—well, as Brenda Frazier is supposed to have said, "Why?" Sig served bad food, meat loaf and hash, and the waiters and referees all wore tuxes, so you can imagine the tumult involved in trying to order a round of drinks! The League lasted only one season. Sig was ruined. It was the price he paid for not learning that you cannot irritate people. ♦

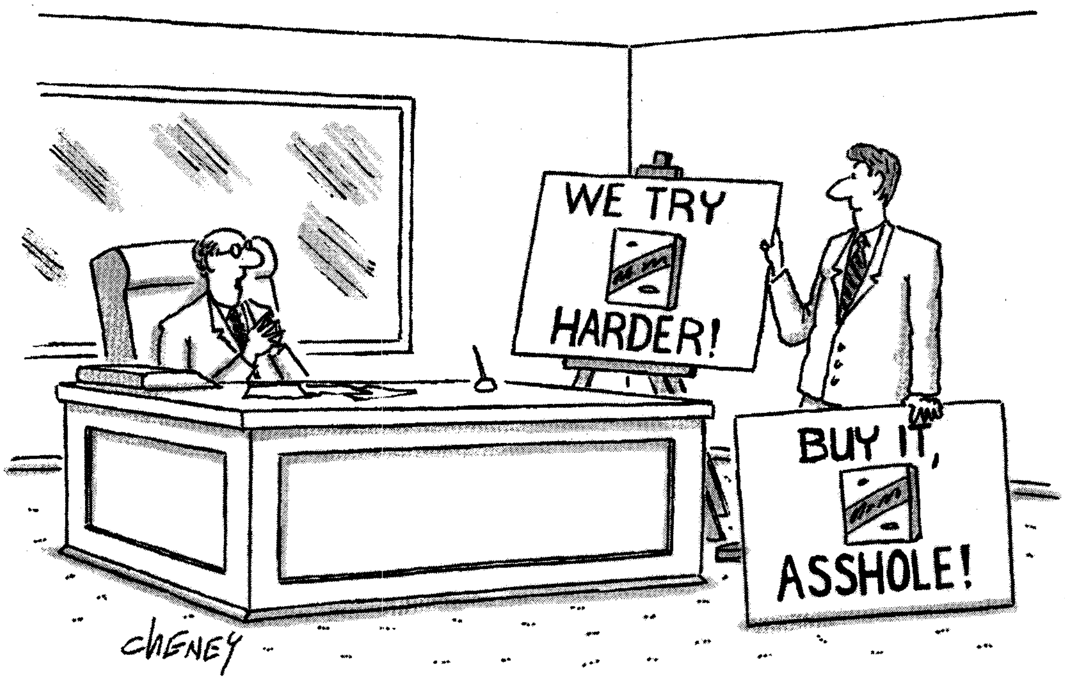
to see that the process—of selection, of approval—was clean and at the same time that the commissions were diverse, aesthetically and even politically. She knew that any physical site in New York City was also a political site, and involved a lot of people taking political power seriously.

JOHN installed his bronzes the next day. He had heard about the meeting. Linda Blumberg had told him there were "problems," but everyone at Percent for Art supported John, and as far as he was concerned General Services wasn't "the community." He wasn't worried about the community. And he wasn't worried about the site. He was excited about the site. "I wouldn't say the basketball player or the girl are my best pieces," he says. "It was the site that counted." After five years, he wanted to see his statues installed. He wanted to walk across Jerome Avenue from the El and into the community and see Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha standing there like guardians, and he was sorry the cops at the 44th Precinct wouldn't be there to see them, too. Their new thirteen-million-dollar station had been such a boondoggle, with so many labor and construction problems, that no one had been able to move in.

John says now that what happened that day—it was September 25, 1991—was a kind of "spontaneous protest," and that he knew right away that it was happening. He hadn't wanted an official occasion—just the pleasure of people walking by and stopping and maybe saying, "Wow, finally, this is really *us!*"—but he says that when the crane was lifting the bronzes from the truck "the mood wasn't right and I had real unease." Corey was at the installation, with his mother, and John was glad she got to see it, because she was terribly sick by then; by the next morning she had died. John's girlfriend, Daisy Maxey, was there—she had driven in from Long Island for the installation—and so were Tom Otterness and Nancy Owens, and Charlie, who was making a video, and a couple of other downtown people. But mainly it was "the community" that came, or, more accurately, it was whoever happened to be out on Jerome Avenue that Wednesday morning and was curious enough to stop and watch.

A woman named Alcina Salgado was out watching. Her apartment, on Gerard Avenue, overlooked the triangle, and she took a proprietary interest in the site. She had been complaining about it ever since the police station was a vacant lot, with a Montefiore methadone clinic operating out of an empty synagogue at one end, and an accumulation of weeds, and garbage piled up everywhere. Mrs. Salgado likes to describe herself as "the lady who cleans up the neighborhood," and she knew exactly how many weeds and how much garbage, because she was the person who went out one day in 1978 and collected it, and put it in blue plastic garbage sacks, and saw to it that the city came and took it away. She didn't want the police station. She complained about the station going up, and then she complained about parking places around the station. She wanted "the decent people" to reclaim the neighborhood, the way decent people had reclaimed her building, after she organized the tenants in 1983, and collected money and hired a lawyer and took their powerful slum landlord to court. They ended up with fresh paint, an intercom, a lock on the front door, an elevator that worked, new windows and mailboxes, a new roof, a new super, *and* a rebate for a year without services. "I'm a neighborhood stalker" is the way Mrs. Salgado puts it. "If I see a hydrant broken, or a street light out, I pick up the phone."

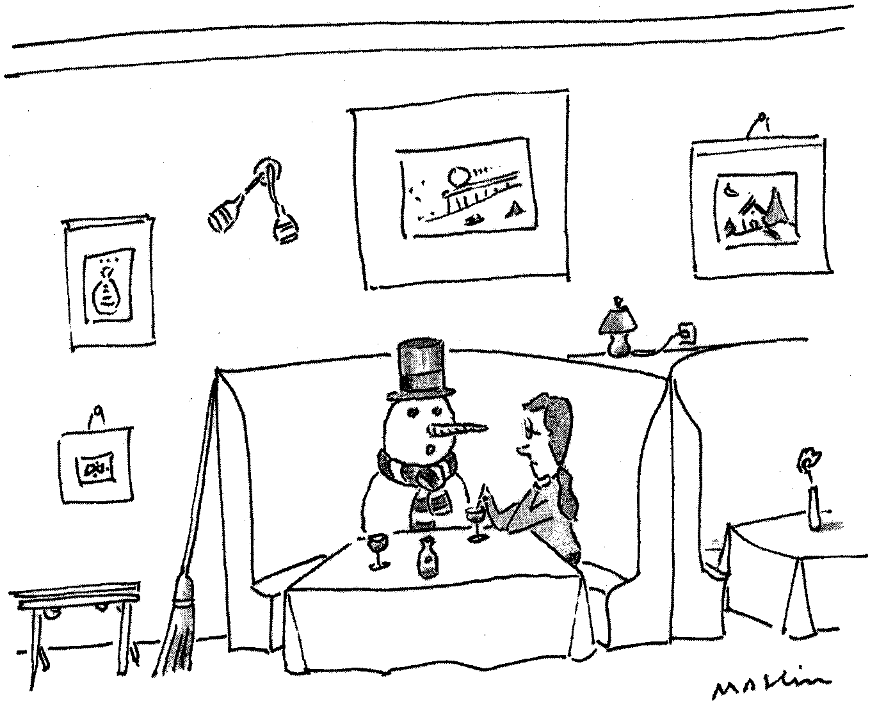
She is not on Community Board Four, but she goes to meetings—though not to the meeting John went to—and the people on the board know her, because when Mrs. Salgado picks up the phone it is usually to call them. She called the board about John's statues. She didn't know John, or that John had made the neighborhood walls, or that she and John had a Walton Avenue connection, because Roy Cohn grew up on Walton, back when it was a Jewish street, and Mrs. Salgado had worked as "head housekeeper" for the family of G. David Shine, the famous private who helped Cohn put together the "evidence" for Senator Joseph McCarthy. But she knew she didn't like the statues. "There are people who go to school and people who go to work, and then there are the people we find on the roof," she says, and she had no doubt that the statues she saw at the traffic triangle that day were statues of the "roof people." It was bad enough to have them on the roof, smoking crack, hanging out, making trouble, and to have to confront them; Mrs. Salgado didn't want to look


WE TRY HARDER!
BUY IT, ASSHOLE!
CHENEY

"Let me see the first one again."

out of her window every morning and see them in front of the station, too, on pedestals. She wanted the police to protect her from people like that. She seemed to think that if John Ahearn was angry at the police and wanted to confront *them*, he should have put his own statue on one of those pedestals. She stood at the corner that day—a prim black woman in steel-rimmed glasses, a woman of propriety and grit who had answered an ad forty years ago in Minas Gerais, and come to America and worked hard and sent four children to college—and she stopped the traffic. She cornered people on the street and showed them the bronzes, and asked them, "Isn't this awful? Who is responsible?" She was asking them that when John went home to his apartment to pace—he was trying to figure out what to say to people like Alcina Salgado, and he still wasn't sure—and she was there asking them when he came back to the triangle, two or three hours later.

John walked up to her and said, "I'm John Ahearn, I'm the artist. I want to talk." All he knew was that he wanted to get this small, formidable woman away from the site, to someplace calm, someplace neutral. He took Mrs. Salgado to Walton Avenue. He showed her his "Back to School" mural on the wall, gave her his catalogue called "South Bronx Hall of Fame," asked her what *she* wanted. "She wanted college kids," he says. "She told me, 'I worked all my life to raise my kids in the right way,' and I could get into that. She thought the bronzes were evil, ugly images. She loved me, but she said, 'These things are going to go.' After two hours' conversation, those were her parting words!"



"It took a long time before I could look myself in the mirror and say, 'I'm Frosty the Snowman, and I like me.' "

That night, John started thinking about Raymond. He decided that Raymond looked "like Halloween." In the morning, he got up and went back to the triangle with a can of epoxy paint and thought some more and then he repainted Raymond's face. He gave Raymond a "sweet expression." He wanted to make Mrs. Salgado happy. He knew why Raymond scared her. He says he could get into that—more, anyway, than he could get into the "art people" who looked at Raymond and said that he was "like a Hopper, staring into the middle distance." He wanted Mrs. Salgado to see "the other Raymond" in the Raymond who, as likely as not, had robbed his apartment two times, the Raymond who always hung around high, making John and everyone else on the block nervous. He believed there was something Raymond knew—some secret, some truth—that he himself might never experience but that a statue he painted "right" might capture and even communicate to a woman who was afraid. He wanted Mrs. Salgado to see that Raymond was "beautiful *and* heavy."

When John talks about that day now, he uses the word "subjective." He says, "It's so subjective," because there was really no battle at the traffic triangle, no terrible confrontation. Not many people complained. And the ones who did complain were angry (or offended or amused), but they weren't a hostile crowd. Nobody was demonstrating. Nobody was screaming. John says it was "the art world against the community," and when he does he sounds as if he weren't part of the argument at all—just someone caught in the crossfire of other people's priorities, someone choosing sides, a victim of his own art. He talks about making people in the South Bronx "happy." He does not easily admit that he needs to make them happy, or why he needs to make them happy, but anyone who really looks at the work he does in the South Bronx knows that his community—the people he loves and casts—is a wellspring for him, the source of a remarkable vision. He needs the Bronx because his art is important. He says, "It's so subjective. To the art world, my bronzes were serious, ironic. They had oomph, they were strong. They were an 'artist's' pieces, and they looked good at the site, but I thought that day, They'll never look like this again. I knew that soon they'd look terrible. Bad. Uglier than Mrs. Salgado said. So I said, 'Fuck 'em, the art world!' It's not my job to be fighting these conservative progressive people—people like Mrs. Salgado. I respect these people. It's not my job to be the punk artist in the neighborhood—like, there's a lot going on in my artistic life besides this installation. There's my concept of casts in people's homes—the execution may be shoddy, but to me those casts are more valuable than a bronze, or a better piece in a collector's home, and if I've misread my people it means I've misread myself and my concept. There's my murals. I'm well aware of why art history hates saccharine, sweet things, but my murals are more important than the bronzes. They're popular, in a simple, storybook way, and that's good, that's a stronger statement, that's maybe *more* serious, because it's more collaborative—it draws on the deeper, idealistic life of the people. What I felt was, I had a choice. I didn't want trouble. I knew the news people would be down. Imagine—all these nice ladies crying on television! I thought, I'm not going to win this. Either I was going to be on Mrs. Salgado's side or I was going to be her enemy. I refused that. I went to sleep that night, and the next morning I woke up and called Linda. I said, 'We'd better take these bronzes down.' "

John says that after that it was mainly "damage control, with everybody doing what they could to throw a big wet blanket over the whole thing." Linda Blumberg had told him not to be hasty. She wanted to reassure him that the program supported the bronzes, and supported him, whatever he decided. She said, "In my experience, the artist knows what works and what doesn't. It should be his decision." John went back to the site with Charlie, who videotaped the reactions: the woman who thought the pit bull was going to "pounce on me"; the policemen who drove by taking snapshots and said, "I don't believe this! You gotta be kidding!"; the man who said, "This is what people are going to see on their way to Yankee Stadium?"; and Corey, who said it was "just like the Bronx, no respect for art." Tom Finkelpearl hung out at the triangle for a day and did a "vox pop." He talked to the people who stopped, and discovered that half of them weren't interested in the bronzes at all but that a lot of the ones who *were* interested thought the South Bronx bronzes were "a slap in the community's face." Tom told John that he would defend with his job John's right to keep those bronzes up, but John said, "It's in my best interests to remove them."

John was less worried then about his bronzes than about what to say to Raymond and Corey. He was going to have to tell his friends that their images had been "rejected" by the community. "It was a rough thing," he says. "I knew it could be negative." He talked to Corey first, after his mother's funeral. It was at the Mormon Chapel, near Lincoln Center—she had had a deathbed conversion—and John says the scene at the temple, "with all those black mourners in the pews and all those grim white elders staring at them from the pulpit," was "like a metaphor" for all the misreadings of the past few days. Corey was grieving, too distracted to take in much of what John told him. But Raymond took it hard. Toby had been the most important thing in Raymond's life—and maybe the only living creature that had loved Raymond without equivocation—and Raymond had always taken his statue to be *about* Toby. When John said that it was coming down, Raymond wanted to organize all the pit-bull owners in the neighborhood and protest. "I felt bad," John says. "I'm close to Raymond. He's one of my favorite people, and I didn't like that I was doing this to him. I tended to put it that they—the establishment—wanted him down." What the establishment really wanted was to avoid a scandal.

John went down to General Services. He wanted to explain to Arthur Symes and Claudette LaMelle that "I don't handle things confrontationally." Ninety per cent of his fee was already paid, and he was going to refuse the rest—he wanted to tell them that. He wanted to talk about what to do with the bronzes, and how to replace them, and he wanted to ease Linda Blumberg's mind (she and Tom were with him) by assuring the people at General Services that the decision was his, that he was not going to call up ABC or the *Times* and complain about censorship, that the story of the South Bronx bronzes was not going to explode. It was not a very friendly meeting—John mentioned that he had a "relationship" with Raymond, and Claudette LaMelle told him it must have been a "sour relationship"—but when Arthur Symes said that John had given the city "some good stuff, but it's the wrong stuff," John tended to agree. He paid for the movers. He kept his statues safe until the movers came. He didn't want the neighbors throwing paint all over the statues—which is what some people said would happen. He called up Mrs. Salgado to explain. He didn't blame anybody. He wasn't angry. The only time he got angry—it was the day the bronzes came down—was when a black police officer drove over from the old 44th Precinct house, on Sedgwick Avenue, and had himself filmed giving a speech about how horrible the bronzes were and telling the movers what to do, pretending, in fact, that the movers were there because of him. "It was some jerk shoring up political points," John says. "He knew when he came that the bronzes were going. They were going because of me."

That day, at the traffic triangle, John had a conversation with Mrs. Salgado's daughter. It was not, John says, "the kind of conversation I'm used to in the neighborhood." It was more of a downtown conversation, because Angela Salgado was in many ways more of a downtown person. She had studied at Sarah Lawrence, and she belonged to the film editors' union and had worked on a Martin Scorsese movie and a Woody Allen movie, sponsored by a black

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BOREAL OWL

You could call it an outing, father style:
driving the two night hours, hard on the single white,
to that Connecticut wood, crowded already
with twitchers—the misguided, the obsessed.

Don't get me wrong. I like nature.
But I froze for ages slimmed behind
my chosen tree, the owl's fabled panoramic scan
failing to oblige the pencil-tickers.
When the head did turn, heavily indifferent,
he had to admit it was the common variety.
There were too many witnesses.
You can't complain. These are the risks.

—EVA SALZMAN

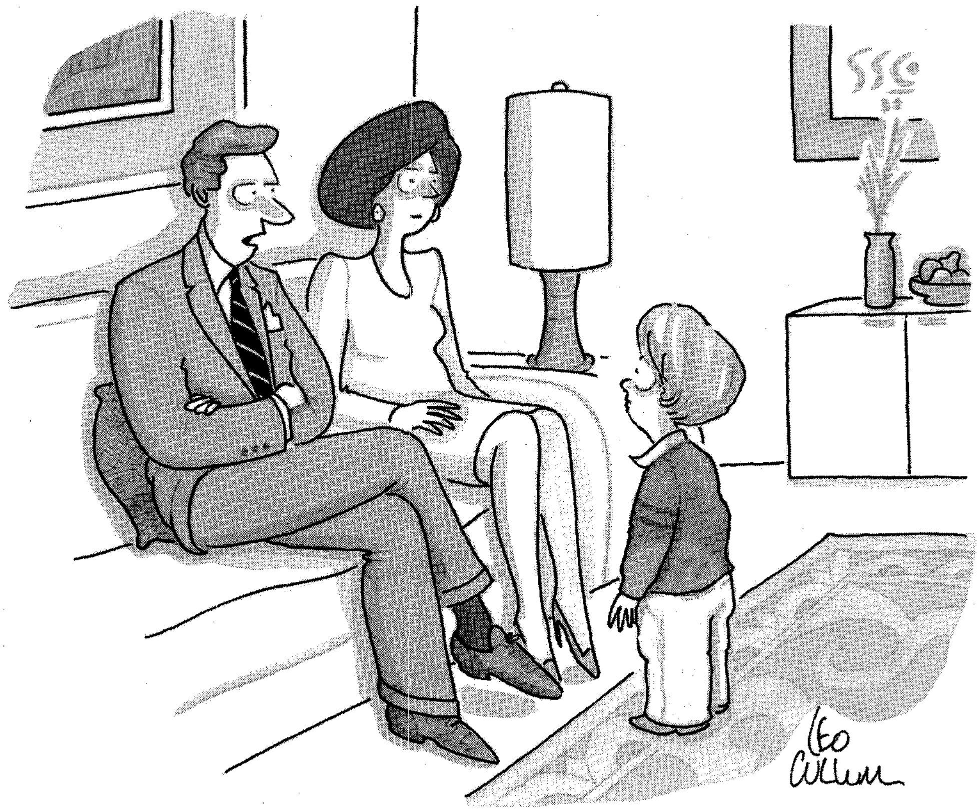
HO!
HO!
HO!
HO!
HO!
HO!

• •

"affirmative action" group called Harlem Fight Back that was better known for disrupting sets and overturning catering tables than for getting its members hired. Angela was angry and articulate. When John met her and heard her talk, he said, "You scare me, you should be a politician or a professor," and she said, "No, I'm going to be an artist. Artists have much more power." Angela was not in the best mood to see John's bronzes. She had just been turned down for a SoHo apartment that was "available" when her best friend—a white friend, from Sutton Place—asked. "I was so saddened and disgusted," she says. "I got home and saw those three hideous statues and I said to my mother, 'I can't live in this neighborhood if those statues stay.' "

She took on everybody at the site. When Nancy Owens tried to explain what she had wanted from the space, and talked about triangles, and alluded to Egyptian forms, Angela said, "Look at what cross-purposes we're at. You're talking about Egypt, and I'm talking about a shiftless fat slob with a boom box, a junkie with a dog, a mountain of stereotypes." When John tried to explain what he had wanted from the statues, and talked about a "challenge to the police" to deal humanely with the neighborhood, she said the statues were "an affirmation of the police's distortions." She said that the neighborhood needed to get along with the police, not to confront them with images that scared them. She said, later, "If not the police, then who's going to get the people who rob me or rape me?" She said that the women of the neighborhood, negotiating their way between the violence and the police, might have been "an image that means something"—that she saw herself as "that little girl, wedged between those two vicious guys" on pedestals. She said that those guys were "the difference between a working-class neighborhood and a ghetto," that they were "totems of racism." She said that John had *chosen* the South Bronx, that John had choices—which was "the one thing that most of the people here don't have." She thought that race was the issue. She thought that John was "condescending and offensive," because he had come to the site with paint and lightened Raymond's face to make him "palatable."

She liked John's work. She said later that she thought the work was powerful—that John had "opened a dialogue that was very inspiring"—but she also thought that John was "passive aggressive," and she said, "I don't let him off." Her arguments were sophisticated. Not many people in the neighborhood use terms like "passive aggressive" to describe John Ahearn, or even know what "passive aggressive" means. John says that she "knew all about me." She knew how fashionable his gallery was, and what a John Ahearn went for, and she was prepared to use that information in the neighborhood if the bronzes stayed. She knew that Nancy Owens' husband was the sculptor Rudolph Serra, and that



"Your mother and I have seen your report card, and we've decided to distance ourselves from you."

• •

Rudolph was Richard Serra's brother, and that white people who didn't like Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc" had been able, finally, to get it removed. She follows the art scene in the paper. She read recently that Nancy herself and her Tribeca neighbors were protesting against a drug-treatment center on their street, and now she wants to know why Nancy Owens' family is "too precious to live with a center that will transform those people," while her own family is not too precious to have to live with those people at their most dangerous. She says that white people who think of the First Amendment mainly as a way to "protect the freedom of expression of artists from SoHo" should ask themselves "What makes Nancy Owens' a legitimate protest and Angela Salgado's protest 'censorship'?"

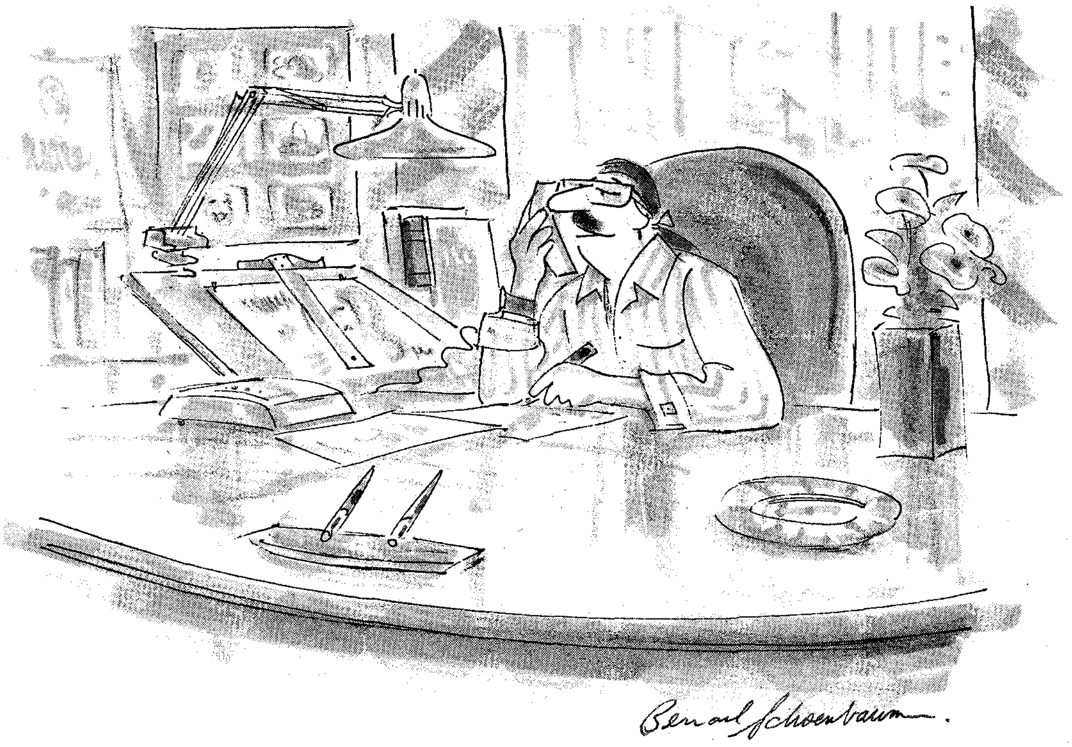
JOHN talks a lot lately about the "dignity" of the community. He says that if his neighbors were invited to Lincoln Center they'd find a way to rent tuxedos and "put their best image forward"—"they wouldn't want Lincoln Center to be a showcase of their private problems, or of how bad the reality is *here*, or how much fighting there is in the neighborhood." He wants his downtown friends to understand that a statue, especially a statue other people see, is "another way of trying to look your best." He is working hard to please his neighbors. He says that for him the value of "making art" in the South Bronx is less the art than the "getting close to people"—or, anyway, close enough so they are ready to spend half an hour wrapped in hardening plaster, breathing through straws in their nose—and seeing art make them happy. His famous Bronx walls—the Kelly Street schoolgirls jumping rope, the families on Fox Street and the families on Dawson Street, and his own Walton Avenue neighbors—made everybody happy. The walls were "positive," he says, though at the time he made them he worried about their not being "art," and wondered if maybe they were a little folkloric. Now he says that thinking about his trouble with the South Bronx bronzes has convinced him that the "discipline of 'happy' is just as important as the discipline of 'strong' or 'tough,'" and maybe even harder to accomplish—that the casts he makes to please a neighbor are "purer than something with too much of myself in it, something individual." His friends in the art world think that the trouble unhinged him. They worry that he is "sacrificing himself as an artist," because from where they stand—in SoHo and Tribeca—his bronzes were a breakthrough, some of the best work he ever did, while the walls he likes so much were a "capitulation." They know his casts for the Fox Street wall—the wall he called "We Are Family"—had fine painting. Strange grays; browns lit in impastos of blue and green. They were a composition *in* color, not a composition about color—that was what made them family. But it is not clear that John would make the same wall now, or that "the community" would let him, either.

Some of John's friends want him to come home, by which they mean home to a couple of square miles of lofts and galleries in lower Manhattan. They assume, as artists often do, that the perfect therapy for a troubled artist is the company of other artists, and coffeehouse shoptalk, and a lot of dropping in at the galleries to make him feel "connected." They have many theories about what John Ahearn is doing in the South Bronx. They have a Christian theory—a "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God" sort of explanation. They have a guilt theory, because John had a brother—an older brother—who died at college, inhaling Freon from a balloon, and they say that John feels guilty about surviving and is in the Bronx punishing himself. They have a twin theory, because John is close to Charlie, and they think that once Charlie was married and settled and had his own family John went "looking for his twin"—in Robert, and in the lost young men in the neighborhood. They say, sometimes, that even his casts are twins, because every time John casts a neighbor he is giving that neighbor a mirror of himself. John has heard all the theories—including the "revisionist" theory, which holds that when John makes a moving and compassionate statue of a girl who happens to be a whore embracing her grandmother who happens to be a drug dealer he is "revising" the block to fit his own sentimental notions of what the block should be—but John says it is really just a question of home. "This is my preferred life, better than my old life," he tells the friends who drive up to Walton Avenue to see him. "Let's not forget, I have a clear need to be here." Sometimes he says he is "performing a service, living on Walton Avenue," because, with John Ahearn on Walton Avenue, the art world gets its Bronx vicariously, and never has to leave Manhattan. He thinks that the people who said, early on, that he was doing a lot for the South Bronx should have been saying that he was doing a lot for the art world, giving rich white people a bridge to the life there, and to a different kind of vitality.

The market in art is terrible these days. John is lucky to sell one plaster bust a year, let alone any of his free-standing casts, which have to be reconstructed in polyadam or fibreglass, and twelve thousand dollars is not enough to keep John and Robert, whom he supports, in paint and plaster. Last year, they started travelling. A couple of weeks before the bronzes were installed, a twelve-year Ahearn-Torres retrospective opened at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. It went from Houston to Rotterdam and Cincinnati and Honolulu, and John and Robert went with it, doing a month of site castings in those three cities, and hoping to make some money. This summer, they went to Washington for more casting, and another show. The work was exhausting, and the trips were disappointing, because no one who wanted a cast had any money to spend. Brooke Alexander says it might not have mattered if there *had* been money: even in good times, John has a real ambivalence about making money from his art. He has always given away his work in the neighborhood, or left it on loan in museums that liked it, and he is very disciplined about "sharing." Whenever he makes a cast for himself, he duplicates the face and gives it to his model—which accounts for the fact that there are John Ahearns hanging all over the South Bronx, next to the plaster saints from Uncle Raul and the anniversary photographs.

Brooke and John have their own arrangement. Brooke says, "I had to get used to John standing apart." He means that the gallery gets its Ahearns when John Ahearn is ready to part with them, which isn't often, since John puts most of his work in a storage warehouse on Jerome Avenue, a couple of blocks from his apartment, while he figures out where it "belongs." It's not that he thinks every cast belongs in a living room on the block, but he does think every cast is part of an "engagement." He says that it has to do with trust—with seeing a kid he knows carry a piece of sculpture home and hang it, and with the life of that piece in the kid's life, with watching the kid grow up, and repairing the piece for him when he breaks it, and getting to know his family, so the family will bring its saints from Uncle Raul's factory over to the studio when *they* get broken. It has to do with art in the life of the block. Brooke calls it "John's agenda," and he goes along with it, because John has always been clear that his commercial life is something very separate from his life as an "itinerant portrait painter" on Walton Avenue. Brooke says that John agonizes when those two lives come together at the gallery. He tells a story about John's first show—it was in 1983, when the gallery was still on Fifty-seventh Street, and John was so reluctant to have his South Bronx pieces at a Fifty-seventh Street gallery that he insisted on showing in July, when most people who buy their art on Fifty-seventh Street are at the beach. (He said later, "How come no one bought?") Brooke says that when John and Robert have a show John worries much less about the collectors and the critics than about the neighborhood: Does he invite the neighborhood? What will the neighborhood eat? Will the neighborhood like the food? What will the neighborhood think when it sees the Alexanders' beautiful Wooster Street loft, with its fine paintings and its sleek furniture? Brooke thinks that John's "understanding" with the neighborhood used to be healthier. It was cut-and-dried—something on the order of "I do your portrait for you, and then I get to do what I want on the piece I keep." Over the years, it has got complicated. It is complicated now.

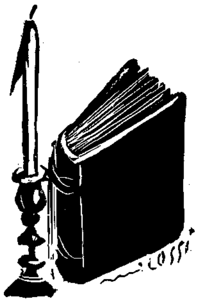
It may be that John wanted Walton Avenue on his own terms. He wanted art to ennoble the street, and all the people to be as beautiful and good as a few of the people were, and with the bronzes reality got in his way. He tried to protect the neighborhood from the bronzes he had made for it, but he never consulted the people on the street or called up any of the influential black and



"Sure, babes, I realize what calling off our engagement means, but I'm perfectly willing to pay a kill fee."

Hispanic people he knew—people like Bill Aguado, who runs the Bronx Council on the Arts and understood what John was trying to say with the bronzes—to defend him. He didn't want arguments in the neighborhood, or confusion in the neighborhood, or the media coming into the neighborhood and asking poor people what they thought about a famous white artist spending a hundred-thousand-dollar city commission on "negative images." ("John made an ethical choice *against* something, not *for* something," one of his friends says. "I think he's uncomfortable with the real ambitions lurking inside him.") The neighborhood is, if nothing else, realistic about money, having seen so little of it. The people there who love John, the people who call him "saintly," might easily have understood that, after spending five thousand dollars on molds, and sixty thousand at a foundry, John Ahearn was not really getting rich on them. John doubts it. He says that the neighborhood simply hasn't made the connection between money and art.

Critics have written a lot about the civilizing influence of John's pieces—about how much the neighborhood "respects" and "reveres" the pieces, since, remarkably, they are rarely vandalized or defaced, and are never stolen. John thinks those critics are fatuous. He is certain that if any of the people who robbed him over the past twelve years thought they could take a piece of plaster sculpture to a fence for a couple of dollars, the way they took his radio and his television, and even his batteries, there wouldn't be a John Ahearn left on Walton Avenue. "The bottom line is that a St. Christopher medal worth four dollars is gone as fast as a battery around here," he says. "Look around. Have you counted the VCRs? Where's the appliances? This place is empty, there's nothing that's for sale, and the cynical bottom line is that life's tough, and people steal, and I'm lucky that they haven't made a material connection between their poverty and my work." He says that if the neighbors had started thinking about a hundred thousand dollars they might well have asked why no one built them a basketball court with the money, instead of a Corey with a bronze basketball tucked under his arm—and not even in the game. Maybe. The people who hated "Corey" think that John should have consulted the "community," but maybe the people who liked "Corey," and wanted it to stay, also think that John should have consulted the community.



It all depends on what "the community" means. Bill Aguado says that in the South Bronx the community too often means the people who see a chance to get involved and win. The community is politics, and has a very narrow focus that doesn't usually have much to do with culture—which is why he thinks that "if we lose John, who's committed to the community, to the culture of the community, we lose more than three statues." Aguado was sorry to see the bronzes go, and he doesn't credit any of the arguments about "stereotypes." He says that most arguments about racist stereotypes are racist arguments—that in the end the people who talk about protecting the community by "controlling the images" the community sees are much more patronizing and paternalistic than the John Ahearns who make the images. Aguado's mother comes from Puerto Rico, and he has argued with Hispanic friends who thought that John's statues were a "slur on the community." As far as he is concerned, they were "an accurate portrayal" of the community. "Art is who we are—it's exactly who we are," he likes to say. "Corey and Raymond are 'life,' whether you like them or not, and if we can't look at life, at what's *real* life, how can we get beyond it? What are our alternatives? Some safe abstract thing? Garibaldi on a horse? Everybody 'happy'?"

Aguado often talks about a public sculpture that was commissioned for another Bronx police station, on Eastchester Road; it was an abstract piece, a square grid of blue metal sticks, and most of the cops hated it, but one cop thought it was terrific, and even "correct," because it would stop a car if "terrorists" attacked. Aguado says the grid was "safe art"—even correct art—but he thinks it would be more important to have Raymond, Corey, and Daleesha in front of a police station than a lot of blue sticks, because people would look at them and start talking, even arguing, about reality, and maybe learn that Raymond and Corey were never the problem, that the conditions that produce a Raymond and a Corey are the problem. He thinks that when the trouble at the traffic triangle started, the "dialogue" should have started. In Japan, you give a piece of public sculpture two hundred years to settle and *then* decide if it's appropriate. In Phoenix now, the rule is five years. In the South Bronx, people settle their differences, and their scores, faster. They have to.

"I had this idea, Love thine enemy," John says. "I was going to replace the bronzes. I was going to donate my time, and work with Robert, and I had some ideas: 'service workers' with kids, a fireman Robert was casting, maybe a garbage collector and a policeman. Last December, I called Mrs. Salgado for advice. I thought, Embrace the enemy. Make Mrs. Salgado the first figure of my new group for the precinct. But when I asked her she started complaining. I thought, Wait a minute. After all we've been through—and you *know* me—you're still complaining. How can I please you? I can never please you. Maybe you're always complaining. This is the first time I'm saying anything bad about her—right? But when I hung up the phone I felt, like, liberated. Like, I love her, but not as much as the first time."

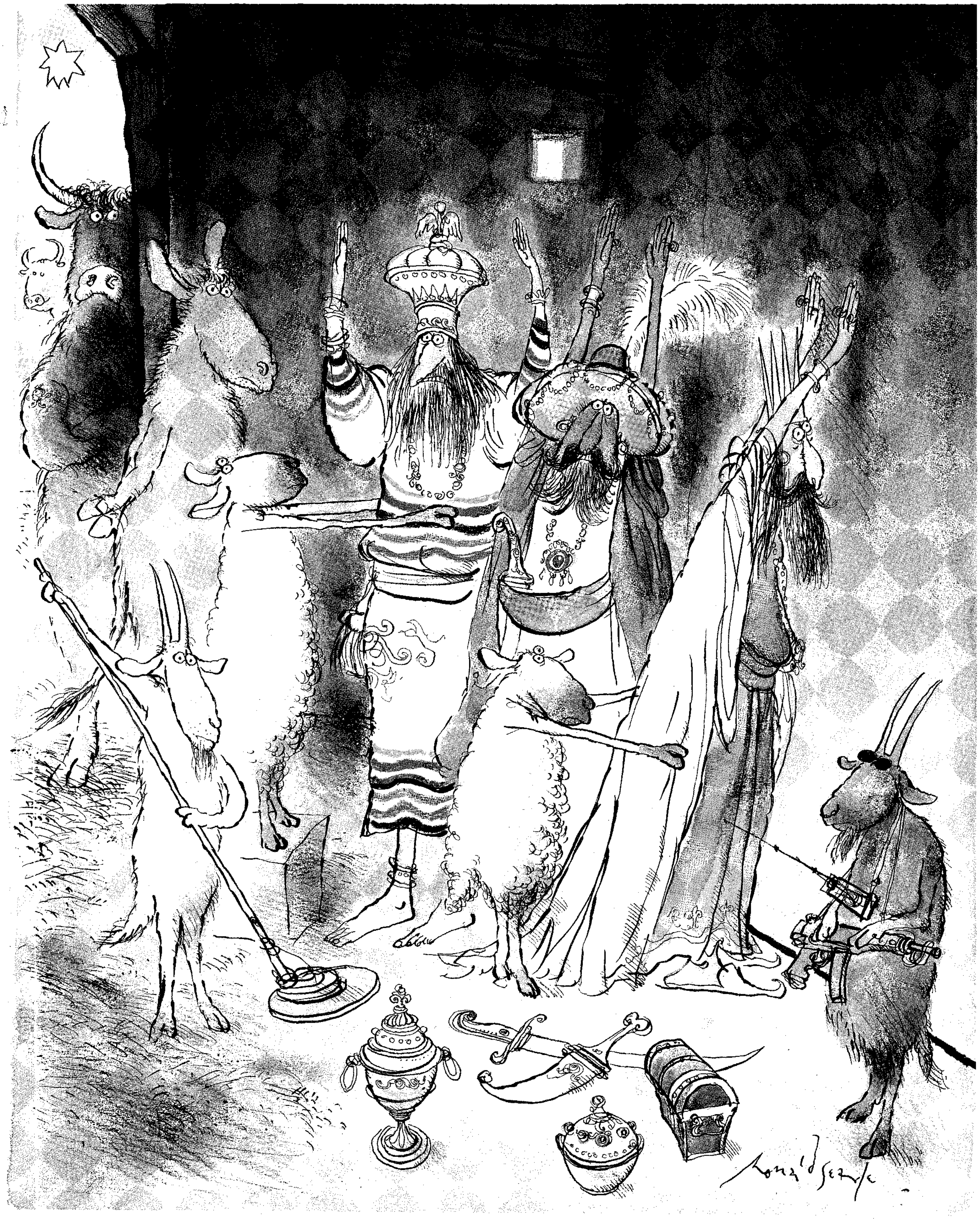
LAST year, Rigoberto Torres moved. He says he had heard it all. The sad stories. The bravado. The South Bronx attitude. He knew that Raymond, whatever he had to say about loving dogs, was "number-one difficult," and that Corey, whatever *he* said about straightening out the block with "little talks," got no respect on the block—that the quiet, decent people raising children on the block were not impressed by Raymond's grief or Corey's chrome. He had been on the block too long, he says, and even in the building too long. His parents were still in the building, and one of his sisters, and the woman he had lived with for eight years, and their children, and, of course, John. The block had been Robert's world since he was eleven years old.

On the block, families like Robert's are an Old Guard—"the guys from the past," Robert calls them. Now the people moving in are Mexicans and Do-

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK

THE FIRST SECURITY CHECK

by Ronald Searle



"This evening, the role of Bob Novak is being played by my husband, Norman Hatcher."

minicans and Ecuadorians. Robert says that the block looks great to them. "They come from almost nothing, they come to *this*, they want too much too fast and lose control." But he does not really understand why the block, the neighborhood, "the community," still looks good to someone like John. "John's got this thing," he says. "He likes Raymond, he likes Corey. His best art comes out of that. But I've been through it, I don't want to see it anymore. The neighborhood's tough—it was tough when I grew up—and whether you mess up or not, it's inside your head. My father prefers work, my brother prefers a beer, everybody's different. But you got to hang on to reality tight here, never let the bad happen. You see a friend turning bad. You see it happening in front of your face, and you use the friend as a mirror. You say, 'I don't want to be this person.'" Now there are too many people on the block that Robert doesn't want to be. He wants to be himself. He loves "the work of making art." He talks about the "amazing materials"—the plaster, the burlap, the Jeltrate and the K-Y jelly and the Johnson & Johnson fast-setting bandages, and even the wires and screws—the way John talks about the "deep wells" of Bashira's eyes. He says that when he met John he knew immediately that John was doing exactly what Uncle Raul was doing, that John's casts were going to be the images that meant something, the images that people wanted to live with, and even needed to live. He talks a lot now about having a factory of his own, full of people "working together, making art." "I'm used to the Bronx—I know how the Bronx behaves—but right here I don't know who I am. I've been working behind John so long I didn't even see what other people"—the people who didn't like the bronzes—"saw. I only saw how *we* felt about art, and people. Maybe John thinks I should have seen, should have warned him. I heard, at the site, '*We* don't look like that!' and 'Who's this drug dealer?' and 'Who's this fat guy, blasting sound real loud?' But all I saw was Raymond and Corey, and I thought, The neighborhood knows these guys. The neighborhood knows that a drug dealer can be anyone—a sixty-year-old lady, a fourteen-year-old girl."

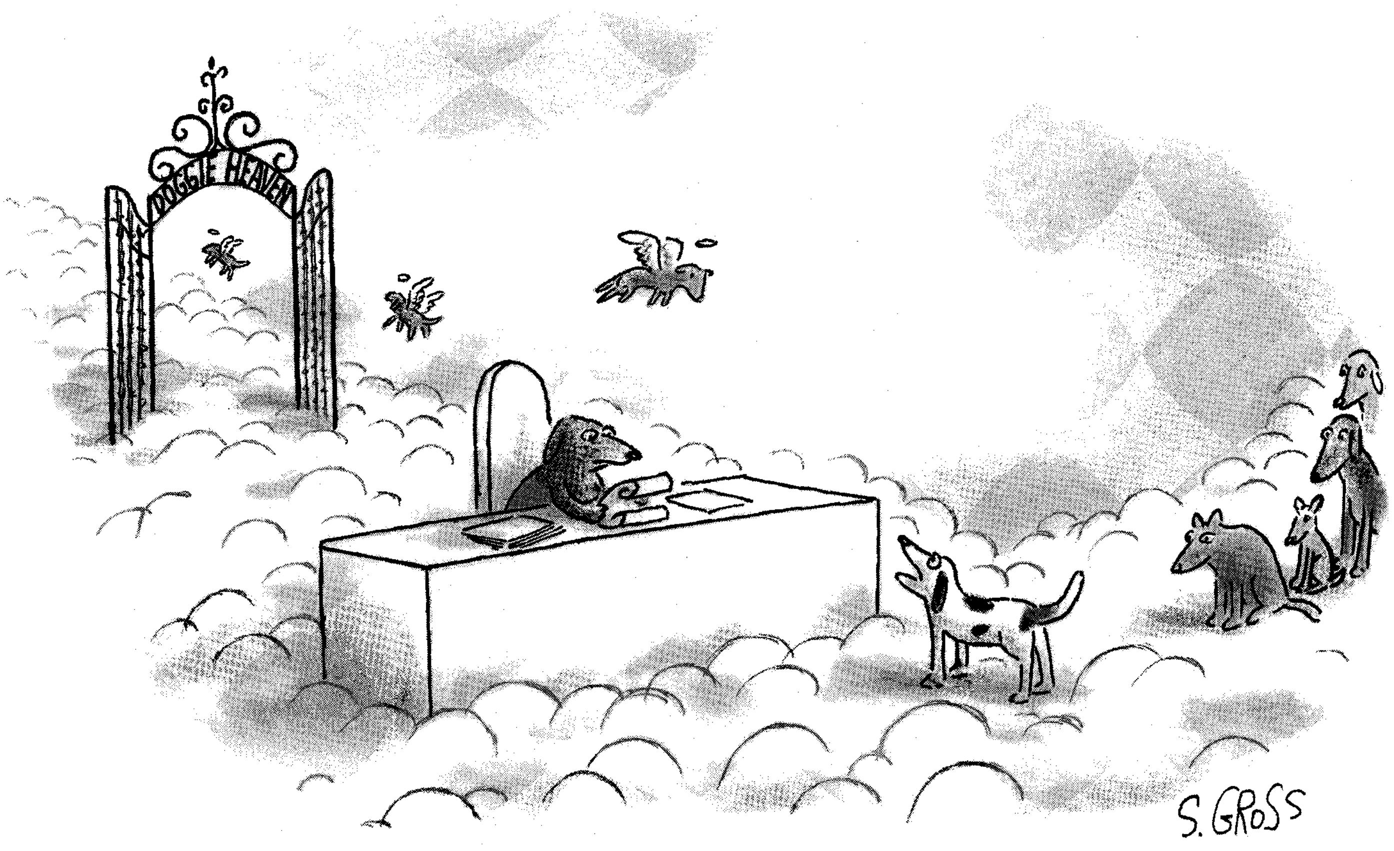
When Robert moved, he didn't give anyone his address—just "the Bronx." He dropped out of circulation. He bought himself a portable phone. When John wants Robert now, he calls and makes an appointment, or he waits for Robert to appear at the studio, which Robert does nearly every day. All John knows about Robert's "other life" is that he lives with a woman, and that they have a baby, and all Robert says about that life is that they belong to *him*. He means not to the block, not to the neighborhood, and not to John. Robert has disappeared before. He spent two years, all told, in Puerto Rico. He moved from village to village, casting the people he met, and he made a beautiful statue of the singer Ruth Fernandez. "It's not how long you go for," he likes to say. "It's the not telling people where you are, or when you're coming back." Robert wanted to prove that he could make it alone, without John, without the block, without the Brooke Alexander gallery. And since then he has always felt "a little strange" on Walton Avenue—as if Walton Avenue weren't his block anymore, as if their studio were "John's place." John still pays for the studio, and every month he pays Robert for his help. It is not an arrangement that Robert likes. When the income-tax people ask "What exactly do you do?" and Robert says he's an artist, they tell him "Robert, you *cannot* be an artist. Where are your sales? Where are your receipts?"

Robert does not think "white" and "black," "downtown" and "uptown," "Anglo" and "Hispanic." He had never heard of political correctness or role models or positive images before the bronzes. He had never even considered the possibility that Uncle Raul, who wanted to cash in on Columbus's birthday, might be stuck with a couple of dozen huge gilt Columbuses at the end of the year, because no one was buying Christopher Columbus anymore. As far as Robert was concerned, the only "incorrectness" John practiced was his smudgy color. He told John, from the start, "People don't want too many colors on their face. Maybe later, but right now they don't know nothing about art, and we're teaching them. And we learn about the community from that. Like, what's black, what's brown? What does it mean?" He thought then that the only real mistake he and John had made was rushing around the world casting, trying to show people that "everywhere you go, everyone is suffering"—trying to buy the time to "work on a Raymond for a few months and produce a lot of beautiful things for the Bronx."

Robert thinks now that maybe John romanticized the Bronx, that he never looked at the people he met on the street as clearly and coolly and skeptically as he looked at the art-world people downtown. He agrees with John's friend Daisy that John embraces everybody he meets in the Bronx "for two months" and then says, "Help! What am I going to do? Get me out of this!" When John talks about the "apprentice" they found in a rice-and-beans shop around the corner—about how poetic he was and how he blew John's mind, talking about "what Tintoretto lost when he moved past Titian," and how "disappointed" in the apprentice John was when he got mad and nearly killed Raymond—Robert will say, "He was interesting, but he had problems, he needed a green card" or "He was interesting, but we didn't know his family." When John talks about the apprentice who lived in a field behind Uncle Raul's factory, and how gifted *he* was—how he could model a figure in action in two days—Robert will remind him that the kid was "nuts," and so violent he nearly killed them all. When John talks about *Robert*, about how Robert is "not intellectual or art historical but has the gut impulse and expression of a true modernist," Robert will say, simply, "I've been there, I've kicked around." When John talks about his own fantasy of the Bronx—about *belonging* to the Bronx—Robert says, "It's time to go. I don't want to live and die here, in this one spot."

JOHN wears a dark-blue sweatshirt with a hood, like Raymond's sweatshirt, and the same sneakers. But he does not look like a drug dealer in his sweatshirt and sneakers. He looks like a healthy, good-looking, blue-eyed downtown artist—which, of course, is what he is. Raymond, in *his* sweatshirt, always reminded John of the hooded monks El Greco painted. He liked the image so much that he cast Raymond in his hood and lent him to a gallery in an old convent near Huelva, and everybody who saw him was moved by his "spiritual" quality. Raymond in Huelva was "site specific," the way Raymond on Jerome Avenue was site specific. Only, the sites were different. Jerome Avenue was a police station, and a statue in front of a police station does not evoke the same associations, or ironies, as a statue in a convent.

This fall, there was an essay on John in *Artforum*. It was about "stereotypes"—about whether John was guilty of stereotypes, and about why a statue of Raymond was a stereotype if Wesley



"Is there any chance of getting my testicles back?"

Snipes, as a crack lord in "New Jack City," was not a stereotype. It was not the sort of essay that the city calls "press." But it raised the only important question. What is "wrong" with reality? John's pieces are all "real" people. Those people are not models for other characters, the way Caravaggio's neighbors were models for Mary Magdalene or St. Paul. They carry their own history and their own names. One of the few times that John gave anybody another name was when he cast an addict who was thrown from a roof in a crack fight. He cast him with a cross around his neck, and his arms in casts, and his hospital gown pulled down, away from his broken skin, and called him Lazaro. St. Lazaro is a sufferer, and people in the South Bronx believe that he suffers for them. Some of those people—people on Walton Avenue—think that John should have put Lazaro in front of the police station, not because it is "Lazaro" but because it is beautiful, "something to appreciate." They know all about the "real" Lazaro. They know he is not a saint—the same way people on Fox Street know that Smokey, the man on the wall called "We Are Family," is not a saint but a fast-living, philandering local preacher. They would rather have Smokey on the wall than one of their local politicians—they call their politicians "poverty pimps." When they look at Smokey, they don't say "John Ahearn is right in the tradition of George Segal and Duane Hanson," the way downtown people do. They say, if they are Hispanic, that John is right in the santero tradition—in *their* tradition.

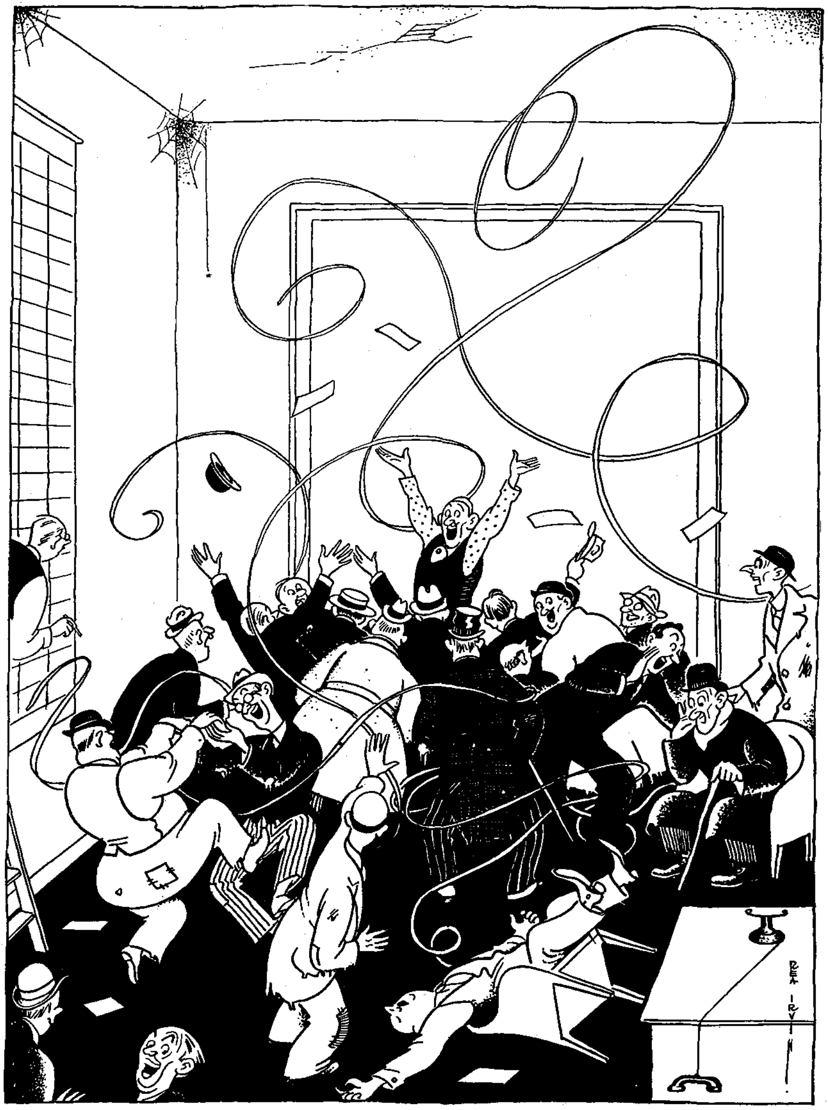
Last week, John delivered a cast of Raymond with his brother Freddy to Brooke Alexander, where it is lit well and hangs on a clean white wall. It is a delicate cast. Raymond is above Freddy, cradling his brother in his arms, and Freddy is reaching up to embrace Raymond. The brothers are smiling, and Raymond's eyes are shut tight. It could be said that Raymond looks "happy." People who come to the gallery keep returning to the cast. It draws them, and often they do not know what to say. Sometimes they talk about the painting, which has nothing to do with the flat tones and surfaces the neighbors on Walton Avenue like; the painting on "Raymond and Freddy" is expressionistic and almost violently tender, and it seems to explode from the skeletons underneath the skin. One man said, "It's like being in a church in Palermo." Another man said, "It's Gothic—it's like being in a fifteenth-century German church." It looked to one woman like a Deposition; she was moved, and she said, "It's Paul receiving Christ." The cast was about art history, and it was also about faith, and love, and dying, and Raymond and Freddy, and it doesn't really matter if you call that "the Italian tradition" or "the German Gothic tradition" or "the santero tradition." John and Robert are the only South Bronx artists working in that tradition now. It would be nice if some black artists were working in it, too (and maybe, unlike John, a black artist would have fought to keep his bronzes), but it would be no more "appropriate"—not if you happen to believe that an artist can't accept somebody else's tradition and make it his own, make it something new, make it truly "multicultural."

John likes to play a Naughty by Nature tape about the ghetto. "If you ain't ever been to the ghetto, don't ever come the ghetto, 'cause you wouldn't under-

SIXTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW YORKER

TURNING OF THE TIDE

by Rea Irvin



A brokerage house receives an order to buy ten shares of Goldman Sachs stand the ghetto, so stay the fuck outta the ghetto" is how it goes. The rap reminds him of black people he used to meet in the sixties, who didn't want white freedom riders coming South, demanding to help them, and he says, "I understand what they're saying." It was one of the things he thought about when he decided that "to stand and fight for the bronzes would be the wrong thing." He still wants to replace the bronzes. He says he owes it to himself and to the neighborhood (and to Mrs. Salgado, who called the community board last month to say that the traffic triangle was filthy and there was graffiti all over the empty pedestals). "I still have this fantasy of who I am," he says. "At nineteen, I got a taste of something—my identity as an artist—and it's still there. I have a handle on it. It's so important to me to keep that flame alive." Tom Finkelpearl, at Percent for Art, wants John to finish the project; he is trying to finance it. Luis Cancel, at Cultural Affairs, seems to want him to finish the project; he is very politic, and talks about "the natural tension between the vision of the artist and the vision of the patron," and about "the pool of people with whom the artist will have a discourse." The people at General Services do not want him to finish it: Arthur Symes says, "To be candid, I don't think that artist should attempt to do anything else on that site," and Claudette LaMelle says, "It's like a bad marriage where you say 'Let's try again,' but it won't work."

"I had forgotten you were funny."

The critic Michael Warner, who is gay, white, and often "correct," wrote recently that a democratic culture had to involve judgments "that do not entirely stem from the self-representations of the people affected." He said that people—black people or Hispanic people, or, for that matter, gay people—can represent themselves in ways that are just as damaging as the ways other people represent them, and that, maybe because of this, "the difference between oppression and freedom can never be reduced to the difference between speaking for others and speaking for oneself." The fact is that any society in which no one has the right to speak for others, or represent others—in a congress, in a piece of sculpture, in a poem—is not just a reduction but a reductio ad absurdum. The categories of representation become monstrously small. "Black" becomes "black man" and "black woman," and then "poor black man" and "poor black woman," and then "poor black man or woman from the block"—and then you have no society left, no community, no "culture." The people who disapproved of "Raymond" assumed that the real Raymond was black, whereas Raymond was in fact Puerto Rican, and the Puerto Ricans in the neighborhood liked his statue. Claudette LaMelle said, "To advocate for you, I have to ask myself, 'Have I walked in your shoes?' " She may have thought that, being black, she had walked in Raymond's shoes, but she hadn't—unless you accept the fact that, from the point of view of art or empathy or compassion, a black woman can walk in a Puerto Rican's shoes, or in a Puerto Rican junkie's shoes, or in the shoes of a Puerto Rican junkie with AIDS, or in the shoes of any man. It interested Linda Blumberg that nobody at their meeting had talked about "Americans," or even "New Yorkers." Claudette LaMelle and Arthur Symes called black Americans "African-Americans," which is currently correct, and Hispanic-Americans "Latinos," which is also currently correct, but Claudette LaMelle referred to the Asian-Americans in New York as "Orientals," which is not correct at all—it was not a matter of prejudice, it was a matter of yesterday's vocabulary.

Jennifer Cutting remarked, after the installation, that if the bronzes had gone up right away—in 1986—there wouldn't have been a problem. She meant that in 1986 the categories were broader. John Ahearn may have been thoughtless or insensitive or, in his word, "dumb" to put Raymond on a four-foot pedestal. He may not have thought enough about what pedestals mean in a neighborhood like the South Bronx, or what bronze means. He may not have understood that a "monument" to Raymond in the South Bronx, where there are no monuments to Alcina Salgado, or, indeed, to Martin Luther King, means something very different from a monument to an Aztec king on the Paseo de la Reforma. He may not have realized that in the absence of more "heroic" images in the neighborhood some people were going to object to the implication that Raymond was the only available image of themselves. He may have overestimated their irony (or their art history), or underestimated their shame. But he was not "wrong" to represent Raymond, or to think he had the right to try. His brother says, "It's all he's stood for, all his work has stood for. He's lost in the Bronx until those pedestals are filled." ♦

TABLES FOR TWO

CHILD OF CABARET

by Whitney Balliett

THE singer and actress Andrea Marcovicci—or simply Marcovicci, as she has come to be known, in the noble, surnames-only tradition of Piaf and Dietrich and Garbo—is back in the Oak Room of the Algonquin. She is, in fact, in the middle of a four-month stand. (Even Bobby Short works only two months at a time in the Café Carlyle.) Marcovicci, in the current idiom, is a cabaret singer. Like her forebears, who were called chanteuses, torch singers, café singers, and saloon singers, she sings in small rooms to small audiences about evanescent things—a blue moon, a skylark, a cottage for two. Cabaret, descended over the past century from the *boîtes* of London, Berlin, Paris, and New York itself, makes intimacy into an art. It is, by its nature, relentless; there is no place to hide—for the performer or the audience. Everything is magnified. Excellence becomes perfection, mediocrity failure. Its sheer intensity exhausts the performer while effecting an elegant fatigue in the audience.

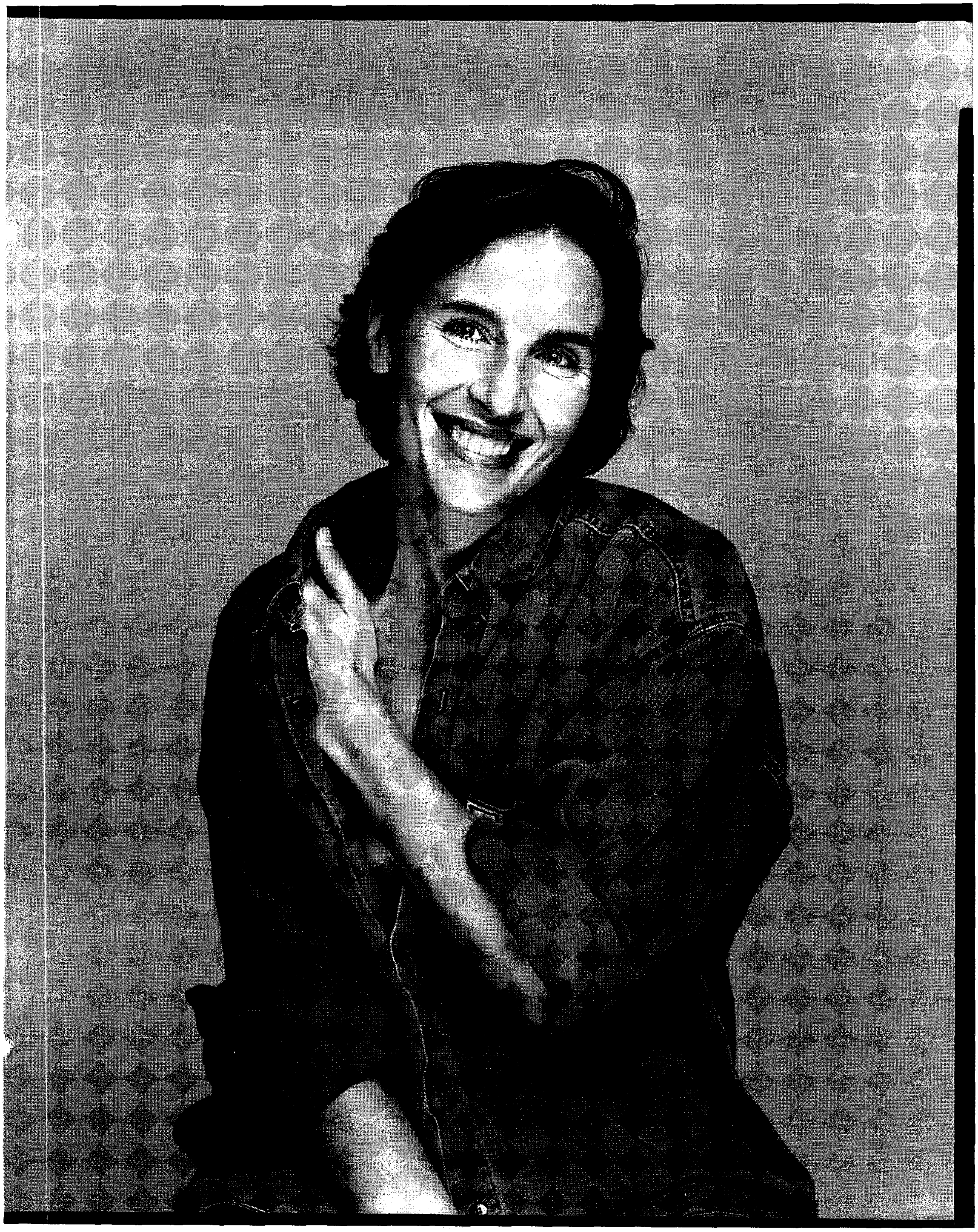
Strangely, few of the great cabaret singers of the past fifty years have been beauties; Marcovicci is an exception. Her forehead may be a trifle high and her shapely classical nose a micromillimetre too long, but she has choice cheekbones, perfect ears, wandlike fingers, an Alice neck, and the sort of parenthetical lines at the corners of her mouth that promise a radiant smile. Just so, she sat in a corner of the Algonquin's Blue Bar recently and talked about her work.

Marcovicci started out in the sixties as a folksinger. She wore a lot of fringe and headbands and sang "awful songs" that she wrote. She idolized Joni Mitchell and Joan Baez and Judy Collins, and especially Peter, Paul & Mary. When she wasn't singing, she was acting. She did Ophelia in Central Park with Sam Waterston; the film "The Front," with Woody Allen and Zero Mostel; and "Ambassador" on Broadway, which lasted just five days. Then she quit singing and moved to the West Coast. She made movies and appeared in playhouses. In 1985, she decided that she wanted to sing the songs of her parents' generation—the Kerns and Porters and Gershwins. Marcovicci associated those songs with her mother, who, under the name of Helen Stuart, had been a singer in New York in the forties. "My mother had to go to work during the Depression," Marcovicci says. "She came to New York as an au-pair girl. She was utterly gorgeous, and she became a beauty queen and was Miss Television at the 1939 World's Fair. After the fair, she started getting jobs as a torch singer. She worked at La Vie Parisienne and the Maisonette in the St. Regis. She gave up singing after she married my father, who was a doctor. I used to go to the Persian Room in the Plaza to watch my parents dance, and I went to Willie and Vera de Rham's dancing school for society kids at the Colony Club. So I had a romantic upbringing, and that's probably where the sense of nostalgia that permeates my shows comes from."

Some cabaret singers never move. Billie Holiday stood straight and still, her head tilted back, her free hand loose at her side, one leg keeping time under her gown—a breeze moving a drape. Mabel Mercer sat in an armchair in her later years, a large scarf over her shoulders, and moved only her head and her right arm. Anita Ellis, dogged by stagefright, stood small and frozen, her hands linked tightly just below her waist, her eyes pained and fixed above the audience. But Marcovicci never stops moving. Like Peggy Lee and the jazz singer Betty Carter, whose motions are visual music, Marcovicci must be seen to be appreciated. Each motion has been choreographed, but her gracefulness gives the impression of complete spontaneity. A set in the Oak Room generally includes over twenty songs, and lasts an hour and a half. She starts poised on a small platform in the crook of the piano, both hands on a floor microphone in front of her. A measure into her first song, her hands take off. She holds them at her sides, index fingers pointed at the floor, or moves them willow-fashion on either side of her head, or knots them together at one side of her waist. Then she rests her right hand on the piano and, folding her left leg up behind her, grasps the heel of the shoe with her left hand—a "Gee, I'm shy" gesture from a thirties Ginger Rogers movie. All the while, she turns slowly from side to side, giving the impression that she is trying to look into the eyes of each of her listeners. (When she catches you, you suddenly feel like the only person in the room.) Around her seventh or eighth song, she takes the microphone from its stand and sails easily up onto the piano. She crosses her legs, then lets one leg dangle over the edge. Her hands keep dancing. She combs her short brown hair with her fingers and rests her hands, palms down, on the piano, steadying herself in the waves of applause. Somewhere around the thirteenth number, she jumps down on the platform and finishes the set there. She smiles much of the time, but when she does a ballad her eyes go dark and the lines on either side of her mouth tighten and she looks as tragic as Duse.

Marcovicci cements her shows with talk. She gives the provenance of each song, describes the period in which it was written, and when she is doing her Jerome Kern show interlards her comments with his biography. She also talks about herself and about her father and mother. All this forms a cradle for her singing. She has a folksinger's voice: her vibrato is pronounced and she tends to ride over or under some of her notes. It is a sweet Baez voice—but when she wants, she can rattle the rafters.

"I have a sense of real peace now, maybe for the first time in my life," she added the other afternoon. "I'm grateful for belonging to the fraternity of cabaret singers. Everybody is loving and supportive of one another. I don't know any other part of the performing world that is so free of competition. I never saw Mabel Mercer in person, but I feel close to her. I even wear a black velvet with white birds embroidered on it that resembles a dress she had. People have been kind enough to compare me to her. I think of Mabel as my future." ◆



Andrea Marcovicci, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, November 25, 1992.

FICTION

WERE THE ORNAMENTS LOVELY?

by Julie Hecht

When people ask me what I did for the holidays I tell them the truth, but they don't believe it. Because in the weeks before Christmas I always go to the Southampton Discount Drugs store to look at the decorations and products necessary to celebrate the holidays, and I go to the East Hampton A. & P. to hear Christmas carols piped through the store on their loudspeakers. I feel lucky that I have these two pleasant places to go. When my husband and I lived in New York City, I had no place to go for this kind of celebration.

I would say that Discount Drugs deserves the award for preparations for holiday festivities—that is, once they finally kick things off with Halloween. It's a long wait through the six-month summer we have now until those shelves of orange candies and plastic masks finally appear. Between the Easter display of lavender, pink, yellow, and turquoise, and the orange-and-black October display, it's a bleak time at Discount Drugs. It's that bleak time now—May—with the empty summer months ahead.

During the months of long daylight it's best to avoid going inside a store lit with long fluorescent bulbs. It's a waste of your life and a crime against nature. I wait until dark to enter, and this is difficult in June, because the drugstore closes at nine, just when it's getting really dark out.

Every Discount Drugs store must have its display up by a certain date. I learned the schedule this year when I asked a co-manager, "Why do you have the Valentine hearts out when it's only January 2nd?"

"We have to have them by December 27th," the co-manager told me. "It's an order from headquarters."

"It's beautiful," I said, staring at the big, dark-red cellophane heart boxes of candy.

"Thank you," the co-manager said. "It's all my work."

"You did a great job," I said. "Except I think it would be better with all hearts and no Teddy bears."

"We don't control what's in it," he said. "It's all directed from headquarters."

Under the red cellophane there was a brighter-red satin, and I remembered that my mother had been given a red satin heart box by my father when I was seven. My mother wasn't pleased with the gift, since she wanted to avoid candy eating, and the candies in the heart were an inferior type. Some had light-green jelly inside. During the same era my father also gave her a Christmas present of a maroon nylon quilted bathrobe from Sears, Roebuck. She didn't like that, either. But she kept it, unlike Jacqueline Kennedy, who, I'd read, returned a red cashmere sweater she'd received for Christmas from her husband the President.

I started my close relationship with one of the co-managers of Discount Drugs a few years ago, when I couldn't find Clorox in its usual place. "They did away with the Clorox," he said. "We don't know why."

"They can't," I said. "Clorox is important. People need it." I remembered hearing Rex Reed say that whenever he interviewed Marlene Dietrich she was scrubbing the bathroom with Clorox.

"It's done from headquarters, there's nothing we can do about it," the co-manager said. "Also glue—we have no more, and it's not going to be reinstated."

During a reorganization of shelf space a few weeks later, Clorox reappeared. I was happy. "I see the Clorox is back," I said to the co-manager.

"Yes. And did you see that we got our glue aisle back?" he said with pride.

Even though my arms were filled with half-gallon jugs of Clorox and I didn't need any glue, I thought I should at least visit the glue aisle, the way I thought I should see Michelangelo's David when I was in Florence, even though I was having an attack of not being able to take a deep breath after seeing too many people at an exhibit. There was definitely something wrong with the co-managers of the drugstore. One of them—not the glue fan—was such a mess that when he was working at the cash register I'd try to figure out how to buy the items I'd chosen without having him touch them. But, then, since he was a stock man, too, he had probably touched everything a million times with those hands with the unclean fingernails.

The man was about forty. He was bald on top of his head except for one tuft of blond hair that stood up and went out in a few directions. The band of remaining hair growing around his head stuck out all over and flew up all around, too. I hated it when I had to ask this man a question. He'd look up, and when he looked up he'd see that his glasses had slipped down. In order to get them back up he'd wrinkle his nose and squint. Next he had to think, then speak, and the speaking part would be hard to understand. The man had never encountered an instructor of yoga breathing—"in through the nose, out through the mouth"; in through the mouth and out through the nose seemed to be his method—nor had he been instructed in yoga exercises for the rest of his body, yet these were two things that would have helped him so much! Yoga breathing and yoga exercise for the whole world!, you had to think when you saw this man. And a macrobiotic diet, too.

There was no way the man's pants could stay up around his beachball-size abdominal area—an area only partially concealed beneath his shirt, which was always missing a button or two and even had a shirttail hanging out sometimes, either in back or in front. The last time I had seen an abdominal area of this variety was on the reproductive surgeon Dr. Arnold Loquesto, whom I'd consulted and photographed, and I had never gotten over the sight. I had seen it on one of my trips to photograph the surgeon when he wasn't in the mood to have his picture taken. He was sitting on a couch and trying out his new blue-and-white-striped bathing trunks as he read his mail, even though it was winter. His eleven-year-old son had called me into the room to prove a fact he had looked up in a book. He stood at his father's side, oblivious of the man's appearance, waving his hand like a circus barker toward the fact in the book, and bidding anyone to enter and see this truth. The surgeon and his abdominal area seemed to be bathed in a golden light, as if they'd been painted by a Flemish master, but this might have been caused by my attempt to avert my eyes too quickly—away from this sight, and toward the boy and the book. If you spin around really fast, you get dizzy, and when you do the yoga eyeball exercises the first time your eyes ache, so it may follow that if you avert your eyes too quickly from an astonishing sight you see flashes of golden light.

But in the Discount Drugs establishment there were only fluorescent lights and not the soft ceiling lights the surgeon's architect had chosen. In this fluorescent light I saw that the co-manager wore black slacks that had faded, light-black areas. His fly was often half unzipped as he lurched up and down the aisles in search of a product that must have been moved in accordance with "orders from headquarters." With those trousers he wore a grayish-white shirt—"what we're ordered to wear by headquarters." The shirt could never be whitened, no matter how many gallons of Clorox were used to wash it, because it was no-per-cent cotton.

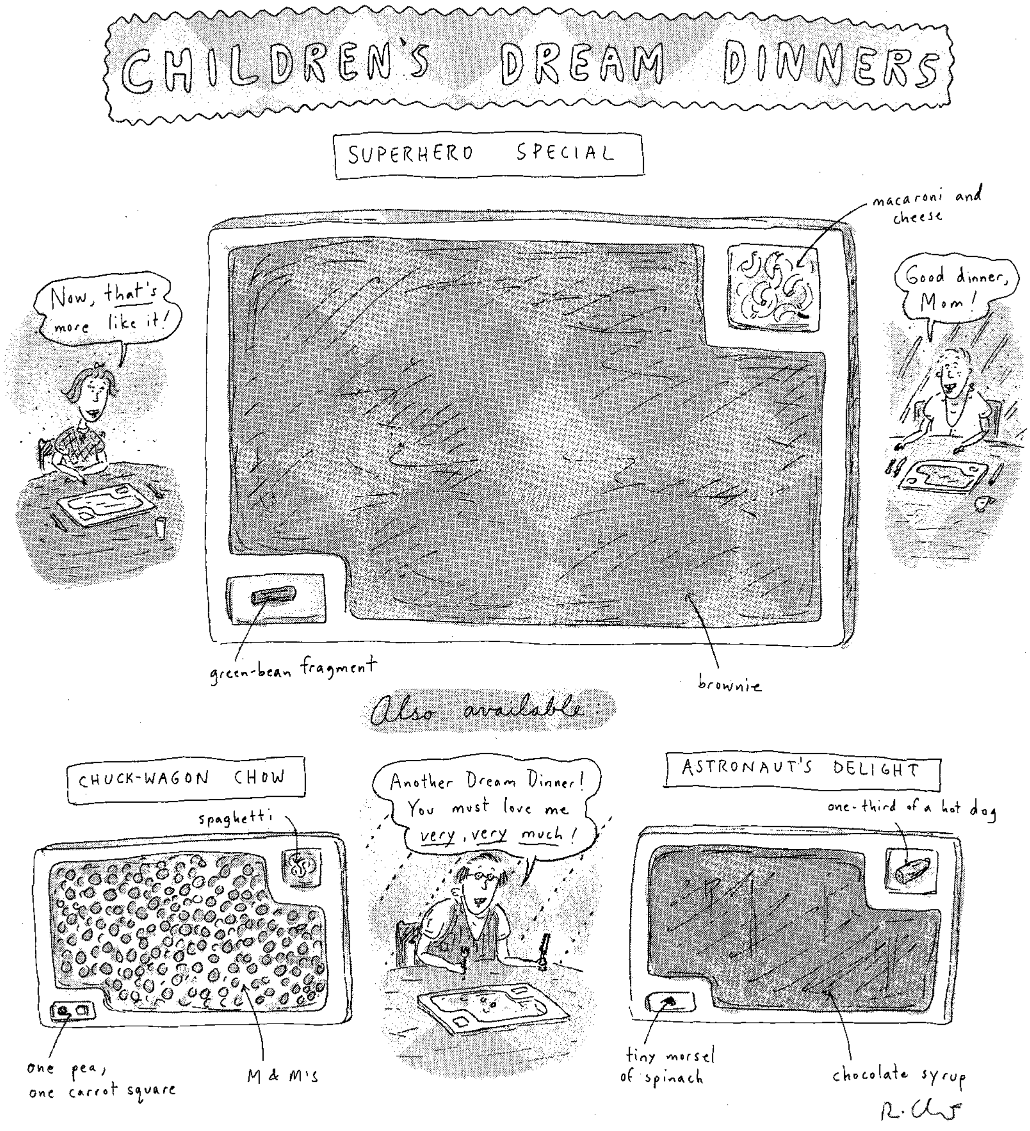
I knew this man well from all the times I'd asked him to lead me to the Dentemp I needed to glue in a temporary crown. An incompetent dentist and his lab had conspired to make a crown the wrong color so many times that I had an ill-fitting temporary one falling out for two years. The co-manager liked to say "Dentie-temp." I loved to hear him say "Dentie-temp, Aisle Four." It sounded like a nickname for the product.

This year, before I knew it, the Valentine display had been replaced with a new, expanded Easter display of lavender, yellow, light-blue, and pink. I was disappointed to see a five-foot stack of cardboard boxes that I knew had to be filled with red hearts being returned to the warehouse or headquarters. Either they'd be back next year, or they'd be expired and sent to the Iraqis or the Russians. "We get all expired foodstuffs," I'd heard the Kurds and Russians complaining on CNN. Right after Valentine's Day, I bought up all the boxes of chocolate turtles for my Swedish friend to take with her on her trip to Sweden. I hoped to prove that there was one good kind of commercial American candy, after she told me about all the delicious healthful candy they had in Sweden. "In Sweden the candy is *good!*" she said. "In Sweden the candy is not sweet!" But when I checked the turtle box I discovered that the turtles were from Canada.

The one candy I knew of that tasted good and was good for you was Japanese macrobiotic rice-syrup taffy. It was also good for removing temporary crowns when your dentist was unable to. "I'll have to tap it out," the incompetent dentist had said. Then he took a small dental sledgehammer and hammered at the crown for several minutes before he gave up and I suggested the taffy. He admitted that another patient had to use Jujubes for the same purpose. This dentist wasn't intelligent but had mastered the technique of saying "How are you doing?" while he was sledgehammering the crown or drilling the remaining tooth down to a minuscule stump without using Novocain. I knew that this was the kind of thing dentists and doctors were taught to say as a way to seem human. I realized this when, on one of my trips to photograph him, Dr. Loquesto was speeding down a truck-filled highway and I was one of his passengers. I asked him to please go slower and he yelled, "No! Why should I go slower?"

"We're in the right lane and we're passing that big truck," I said.

"Look, we're past already," he said,



and then I remembered that this was the same technique he used for various medical procedures. If the patient complained he'd say "It's over already. How can it hurt?" Or his own very special trick—"I haven't done anything yet. How can it hurt?"

MY feeling of luckiness at having two places to spend the time around the holidays increased this year when instead of closing, as had been threatened, Discount Drugs was renovated; headquarters decided to widen the aisles, repair the leak-stained ceilings, and install a real pharmacy. I looked forward to the arrival of the pharmacy, even though I buy almost no pharmaceuticals—I use herbal tinctures from health-food stores instead. But I like to watch pharmacists talking while staring down and counting pills. The "hygienic pill-counting tray" is a favorite of mine, and a drugstore with pharmacists is a more substantial place to visit. It would have the new ceiling, too—as important to me as the restoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was to others—and now I would have two pharmacists to watch and maybe even to talk to. It turned out that one of the pharmacists knew Dr. Loquesto from his last pharmacy job, in the part of Massachusetts where the surgeon ruled in academic medicine. He said he knew the surgeon's hospital and then told me his own plans for which hospitals he'd go to for different emergencies. "An accident—a limb is severed—I'm packed in ice and flown to New York" was one plan.

I had to hope Easter would be over early this year when I saw the frightening new expanded Easter display of woven-plastic baskets of colored candy eggs, plastic grass, and chocolate rabbits—all topped off with big stuffed pastel rabbits and wrapped in yellow cellophane. I had never seen these kinds of things packed together in quite this way. I began to wonder where did Jesus fit in with Easter decorations. Where was Jesus was something I'd been wondering on and off since last year, when I'd heard a middle-of-the-night TV program starting with a question like "What is the consciousness of a frog?" and leading up to the idea that Jesus was everywhere.

They tried to make the program sound scientific—they started out with a bunch of professors and scientists telling about a frog's mind and a human brain—but all this was beating around the bush and leading up to God and Jesus. They didn't fool me. It had that God-and-Jesus creeping edge the whole time, and was followed by an even sneakier show proclaiming that there was an answer to problems between husbands and wives. The show was hosted by Dick Clark, who was trying out a tragic look that he tried to perk up with interested smiles from time to time. I knew that he made everyone watching feel bad and old when they remembered seeing him as the host of "American Bandstand," compared with his descent to being a shill for a mass marriage counsellor. After about an hour of the counsellor's hinting at something like "all the bad things you men do to hurt your wives each and every day," not talking turned out to be the main thing. I think what he said next was "You ladies speak an average of a hundred thousand words a day and your husbands speak sixty thousand. When they come home at night they've already used up their quota. That's why they have nothing to say."

This made sense. My husband liked to say, "You knew when you married me that I didn't talk." What I didn't know was that Tourette's syndrome was his favorite disease to read about, because it was a disease he wished he had. It was an exaggeration of his own personality—yell a few words, sometimes obscene, have no recollection of yelling the words, make strange facial expressions, try to act things out like a mute rather than speak a word or two.

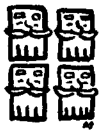
At the end of the pitch for the course on communication and saved marriages, the counsellor, with Dick Clark's prodding—it was less sincere than his introduction of the Five Satins—finally gave the biggest pitch of all, which he had been saving up. I think he said, "And do you ladies want to know the one thing you do that makes your husbands feel as bad as they make you feel?" The ladies wanted to know and I wanted to know, too, just as I wanted to know about the consciousness of a frog and the whereabouts of Jesus. But you had to send for the tape to find out. I'd never do that.

THE whereabouts of Jesus was on my mind as usual when I saw the Schoenfeld brothers walking along a tree-shaded street on a warm, humid evening last November in East Hampton. It was the time of gloom that came after the Supreme Court confirmation hearings.

I had first seen these brothers at the bottom of the cliff at Cliff Beach in Nantucket, fifteen years earlier. The brothers were walking along together near the water, and they were wet—they had just been swimming. I had biked to the beach to watch the sun set, and no one was around except some people on the porch of a house on the cliff. These people were drinking their way through the sunset hour. The brothers were white—not that they were white as opposed to black, they were very light-skinned. They appeared to be in their early fifties. As they climbed the long wooden stairway to the top of the cliff, I saw that they had wavy light-red hair, and when they got to the top step and said hello I saw that they had light-green eyes. Since they were at least a generation older than I was, it seemed safe to talk to them. The brothers looked like twins. They were not tall and they were thin, but not like the man in the ad "I used to be a ninety-eight-pound weakling." They had the amount of muscle development that people used to have from doing normal athletic activities rather than going to gyms. The brothers wore navy-blue bathing trunks, and each brother carried a worn-out white towel with faded stripes. After we exchanged pleasantries—and everything anyone said to me in Nantucket seemed to be a pleasantry, because I still lived in New

York, where life was a hell—the brothers put on their sandals and left Cliff Beach.

I immediately began to wonder about the brothers. Middle-aged twin brothers swimming together. They looked as if they were used to spending their time in each other's company. What had gone wrong in the brothers' childhood was something I wondered, even though I was not a psychiatrist. The last time I had wondered what was wrong with someone, a certain endodontist in East Hampton who behaved like an inmate of an insane asylum, the woman I was discussing him with—a cashier at a health-food store—said, "Why, are you a psychiatrist?"



One of the pleasantries I'd exchanged with the Schoenfeld brothers that day was a brief discussion of where the good swimming was. "How can you swim amongst the waves?" one of the brothers asked. He was the more talkative of the two. The other, less interested brother hovered behind him.

Every summer after that I'd see the brothers at Cliff Beach. After a few summers they told me their names, and sometimes my husband and I would spot them at night walking around the town. I never saw them with anyone but each other. I felt sad about this, but they never saw me with anyone but my husband, and this didn't seem to make them feel sad.

A few years after our first meeting, on one of those afternoons in late September when the light was too beautiful to enter the East Hampton A. & P. to buy one lemon, I went into one of the overpriced small stores that the local people never patronized. I thought that in this one case it would be all right to pay forty cents for a lemon in exchange for the better light. I recognized a man who was looking at jars of mustard without any real purpose. I couldn't remember how I knew the man until I realized that he was one of the Schoenfeld brothers, the less talkative one. I figured that the talkative brother was in a different aisle. After he smiled at me and I smiled at him I decided to say, "I thought I recognized you from Nantucket."

"Oh, yes—that's it," he said, as if he didn't care one way or the other. "What are you doing here?"

"We live here, but we go there in the summer. What about you?"

"Well, the same thing. Because it's far superior there. The swimming is better. You don't have the crowds, the bad element." By the bad element he meant someone like a woman I had just seen enter the store. She was dressed like Chiquita Banana, but she wasn't wearing any bananas. She was dressed in golden, banana-colored toreador pants, very tight and shiny, her midsection was bare, and she wore banana-gold wedgies and large disk-shaped earrings not much smaller than disks for a compact-disk player. She wore a white turban and lots of bracelets, and a gold belt with the disk motif, and she had red nail polish on her long fingernails and her toenails.

"I guess we'd never see anyone like that in Nantucket," I said.

"No," the brother said, shrinking away from the sight.

After the lemon-buying incident I saw the brothers all around East Hampton and even once in Southampton, the next May, at a vegetarian restaurant. The brothers hadn't noticed the sloppiness and hippieness of the place and were gobbling down sprout sandwiches. There was a rumor that anytime people ate at this place they got sick. The brothers said they had just discovered this restaurant and wasn't it good? What could I say? I said yes. Probably the sprouts had been grown in a dank basement under the store. No, they were too disorganized to grow their own sprouts, and tore open twenty-pound bags and served the sprouts without washing them.

The brothers said they'd be off to Nantucket soon. They asked me where our house was and I told them in a way I hoped they couldn't understand. I liked the brothers, but I didn't think I'd want to find them walking down that lane, a lane traversed by only five or seven people a day. Once, when I was standing outside staring at the garden, a man biking down our lane stopped to ask me the question "Is this your house?" I had to say no—it had been rented to us for several years. I wanted to say yes, we owned it, but Nantucket was too small to get away with a lie about that house, because it was the most desired house on the island. Although it had only one bedroom it had four fireplaces and four bathrooms and was on the most beautiful lane on Nantucket, if not in the whole world. Sometimes when I came out in the morning I'd find a painter painting a

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picture of the house. Once a German tourist dared to ask me how he might rent the house. "You may never rent it," I wanted to say, but I restricted myself to saying that the owners lived there all the other months—a lie. People were desperate about this house, including me, even though my husband said he hated it because there wasn't one comfortable place to sit. When I repeated this to a neighbor, she said, "Yes, well, men are strange"—something I made a note to remember.

The man on the bike didn't look like a Nantucketer, he appeared to be a New Yorker; he had that hunched-over, beaten-down New York-intellectual look. Just so he wouldn't feel too bad—I could see he felt bad enough already—I told him about a slew of terrible houses we'd rented from dishonest real-estate agents before we'd found this house by accident. As soon as I said "dishonest," the man guessed the names of the agents, and began to tell about the houses they'd rented him, the intentional misrepresentations of the houses, the lies he'd been told, the things that were wrong with the houses, the ulcers they'd exacerbated, and how he didn't have the strength to fight these agents because of his ulcers and his work—a philosophical, historical discourse on an era I'd never heard of. His house this time, he complained, was drab and ugly, and had no "objets d'art." I said that our house had none of those, either. I said that we had to bring a carton of our own things every year to make it light and summery. Then the beaten-down, ulcer-ridden intellectual asked if he could have a look inside the house. I said that sometime he could but that my husband was sleeping and the house was so tiny that there was no way to enter without waking him. This was the truth. The man seemed disappointed and looked longingly toward the windows he was hoping to peer through to see some objets d'art. I swear there are no objets d'art, I wanted to tell him, but instead told him that the whole house was painted dull gray. A lie. And also how I had to run from room to room to cover all the dark furniture with cotton sheets the minute we arrived. He seemed to feel better as I went on—it was all so realistic, the man on the bicycle could tell from his years of house renting that it had to be true. He finally lost interest and went on his way. I could see him planning his return to his wretched garret to get back to work on his intellectual œuvre.

Maybe if I simply said "Yes" or "No" or "Good evening," the way other people did, I could have spent my time more profitably. I didn't yet know the busy surgeon Dr. Loquesto, so I hadn't learned from his example to "keep moving."

One September evening in Nantucket—it was a few months after I'd met the brothers eating sprouts in Southampton—I was biking back from Cliff Beach past the Congregational church, and I saw a group of about twenty people going up the steps to the beautiful white building. I looked on the billboard to see if there was a film festival—maybe "The Stranger" would be playing. It wasn't a film festival but a Jewish High Holy Day service being held at the church. This was something I wanted to check out. I wasn't that much more inappropriately dressed than the other people I saw going in. I was wearing a long, faded blue cotton skirt and a faded pink T-shirt, but the T-shirt was French and had small shoulder pads. I had some thin ankle socks under my non-leather walking sandals and these two things—the shoulder pads and the thin socks—made me think I could go up to the doorway and peek inside. One thing I wanted to see was what had been done with the Cross.

About a hundred people had turned out for the service. They were people I'd seen all my life in Nantucket. Some looked happy and some looked nervous, and I wondered whether this was really such a good idea, to take over the Congregational church. Even though they hadn't taken it over by force, the way students took over college buildings in the sixties, still. Probably they were just happy that they didn't have to go back to Boston or some other hot city and could stay in this idyllic place without feeling it was a sin. People were not much more dressed up than I was. A few older ladies wore real dresses, but they were plain cotton dresses. No one wore jewelry or even pearls. Some of the men wore sports jackets but only two wore ties. One of these two was a town selectman who had attended Choate, Princeton, and Yale.

I was standing in the back watching the service proceed. Even though it was in English, not Hebrew, I couldn't follow it. Then I saw two other people standing and watching from the other side of the room. These two were the Schoenfeld brothers. They were wearing khaki Bermuda shorts and navy-blue Lacoste shirts with alligators on the chest. They wouldn't be seated but kept watching intently. Then I saw the Cross. It was covered up with a piece of dark-blue fabric. In front of the covered Cross was an ark with blue-velvet-covered Hebrew scrolls. I wondered whose job the covering of the Cross had been—was it the job of a Congregationalist or a Jew, and which case would have been worse if viewed by Patrick Buchanan. I couldn't think of a scenario that would reflect well on either religion, especially the Jewish religion, even though you just knew the Congregationalists had offered the church and probably even suggested ways to hide the Cross. Wouldn't the covering of the Cross bring up all those Crucifixion stories? It would be better for the small Jewish population to continue to walk uneasily down the cobblestoned streets of this island feeling guilty, as they always had on the High Holy Days.

After watching the Schoenfelds and taking a rough count of the other shorts and polo shirts in the room, I began to feel bored. The doors were open and there were two large standing fans going—and outside the doors I saw trees and leaves and sky. I thought it would be better to be outside under those trees than inside the complicated atmosphere of the Congregational church.

Once out in the air, I still couldn't stop thinking about the brothers. I wondered why I kept meeting them everywhere. I didn't see how we could have so many interests in common.

One evening the next year, I was in Nantucket and my husband was called away on architectural business—his clients wanted to get on with plans for their unsightly buildings. I met the brothers on Main Street and had a chance to find out more about their lives. They were court stenographers. They lived in Southampton all year in different apartments in the same neighborhood. They left Southampton only to go to Easthampton and Nantucket. They came to Nantucket for the summer and stayed in a hotel. I couldn't tell if the arrangement was a good or a bad thing. I listened to each brother telling what his hotel room was like, and this was confusing, because sometimes I couldn't be sure which brother was which. As usual, one brother talked more and the other seemed to wish to be elsewhere. If my husband had been around he wouldn't have wanted to talk with the brothers at such length—in fact he once referred to my acquaintances with people I met as "a series of aimless, futile encounters." It wasn't as if he wanted to have purposeful encounters or a busy social life. He wished to have no human encounters, or as few as possible. He preferred dogs to people but we didn't have a dog or any kind of pet. That left books, like "Best Jigs and Techniques for Precision Woodworking" and "The Lost Art of Building Stone Walls," and the television.

It was a night in Nantucket last summer when I realized that this was a problem many men had. It was a year before I had the election campaign to keep my mind off things. I had just seen one of the brothers walking alone, and I had a fear that something had happened to the other brother, so I was careful to avoid the brother I saw. I parked my bicycle near a bench on the sidewalk and went up the steps to an antique store that had some ship paintings in the window. All the ones I liked were eight hundred or two thousand dollars, but one crude, amateurish one was only four hundred. Some of the parts of the boat weren't painted but glued and pasted on. The clouds were made of cotton balls, and the sails were tied on with string, which was knotted on the back of the canvas. The cheerful saleswoman said she liked it, and didn't it look like something a family had worked on together? I had no personal knowledge of any such wholesome family activities, but I went along with it and said yes. "This looks like the kind of thing my four sons might have done with their dad as a family project," the woman said. I suddenly became frightened by the woman's wholesomeness—she was not old

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enough to have been a parent in the great era of American family life, she was about fifty-eight. But maybe she was from Minnesota or someplace like that, where these activities still went on. Then I said that my husband would come see the painting when he came back up. "It would be good for his study, wouldn't it?" she said. I felt I could tell her that our house was so small he didn't have a study and that our variance to build one had been denied. I explained what a blow this was, since I had hoped to move the television into his study so I would never have to hear that switching around with the remote control again.

Then I realized that the woman had assumed we owned a house in Nantucket—an assumption I liked to play along with. "You know, one of the builders is building these little annex doghouses," she said. "They're really cute, too—they were meant for dogs originally, but people are using them for other purposes. A man and his TV is a very popular use, I hear."

"I don't think we have enough land even for that," I said.

"It's only about eight by ten," she said. "That would give him room for his chair and his TV," she said. "And a small table for a glass and a beer bottle."

Although I hadn't described my husband and his chair and his TV and his glass in his hand—his best friend was this glass—the wholesome woman somehow knew the exact picture. I looked into her eyes, and she looked into my eyes, and we both smiled. Then I laughed, and she kept smiling. It was the woman's acceptance of what husbands do. It was the idea of her four sons working with their dad on family art projects even though she was probably in the kitchen at the time frying up bacon in a skillet and cooking all kinds of other animal fats—fried eggs, sausages, Spam, and even that cheese with meat and olives smashed into it. Her past seemed too wholesome and American to me, although I'd been trying since I was a child to pick up a sense of family life from people like this in places like Nantucket. I looked at the woman's smile, her face, her chin-length pin-curled white hair, and her slightly buck teeth, and I realized that she looked exactly like Dwight Eisenhower. It wasn't what she was talking about, either—she really looked like him.

THE SYSTEMS

Sleeping away from the primacy. Sleeping, you might say
slipping, together away from the first night's paradigmatic
passion-and-slumber. She looks across
their bed: he's dozing. He's a version
of someone she once loved; he's connected
to that person by a continuous stream of versions
of himself. She sees now, anything

implies a system attached to it, a penny
glinting dully on the noontime street implies
the entire sun, a fact implies its being gossiped
through a secondary network.
The years fly away with us all. She
remembers two lines from a poem by Chu Ch'ing-yü.
Some court ladies are walking the pavilion:

They want to talk of palace matters
But dare not, in front of the parrots.

—Albert Goldbarth

I was probably falling into a kind of trance that enabled me to imagine that the people speaking actually turned into what they were speaking about. Maybe this was a psychological disorder on my part. As I looked into the eyes of the speakers, somehow something turned them into the substance of their subject matter. This often happened when I watched "Crossfire" on CNN. I watched this show mainly for entertainment. Also I thought I could get some pointers on how to tell lies in a smooth way. It was during an argument by Patrick Buchanan that I first felt a transformation taking place. He was yelling things about the "viable fetus," and I began to wonder when it was that every common person learned when a fetus was what. Facts about fetuses were now known by just about everyone on TV.

During this angry shouting by Patrick Buchanan of the word "fetus," I saw that he knew deep in his heart and brain and soul what a fetus was. Whenever I pictured the tiny fetus at its early stages of development I always had sympathy for it and hoped it wouldn't be aborted. But Patrick Buchanan himself had been a fetus, I understood as he said the word over and over, and then I began to picture him as a fetus. He was one of the ones that survived. I began to try to picture the more intelligent and admirable commentators as fetuses, but when their turns came up for the final rebuttal, none seemed to be that admirable or intelligent. Only Michael Kinsley had the right to life. By then the fighting part was over and the jovial camaraderie-and-good-fellowship ending was coming up.

I left the antique store without any sailboat painting for my husband's study or doghouse. Then I saw the brother again. He was slithering down the outside of the street and there was no way to avoid a meeting. It was the background brother this time. He said they'd had dinner at a place on Main Street and that he was on his way home to his hotel. He said that they had dinner at this restaurant almost every night, and how convenient and inexpensive the restaurant was. Then he asked about which restaurants we went to. As I told him where we went, I began to wonder why we kept going to Nantucket every summer. Our life there sounded so monotonous and empty. The nights of going to these restaurants did, anyway. And as I realized now how dull and empty our evenings in Nantucket sounded, I remembered that Dr. Loquesto had been the first to warn me of this. "What do you want to go there for? You just go to the beach. How dull!" When I said we didn't stay at the beach but biked into the sunset and walked through the moors picking beach plums, he yelled, "Even worse!" And when I gave his family some beach-plum jelly I'd made from the picked plums, he tasted it and made a horrible face.

The Schoenfeld brother and I walked down Main Street toward Orange Street. We agreed that there was really no other place we'd rather be than Nantucket or northern Maine. As we neared his hotel I told him that we lived right around the corner and asked if he would like to see our house. He said O.K. kind of nervously. As I took him down the dark lane that led to our moonlit white garden he said, "I didn't know there were any little houses back here."

Unlike the sallow, downtrodden intellectual who wanted to see our house, the Schoenfeld brother was not eager for the house tour I was planning for him. I felt that I was dragging him down the lane along with my heavy, old-fashioned Raleigh bike.

"We've walked by this field of wildflowers and this vegetable farm, but I don't remember any little house," he said with anxiety.

Perhaps the brother thought that I had a romantic interest in him. If I had a romantic interest in any man, I'd never invite him by to see a lane or a house. I would have to ignore the man completely. Didn't the brother know how these things worked? Instead of being astounded by the beauty of the lane and the tiny house, he seemed to become more jittery as he said again, "I never knew a house was here."

We went into the house through the kitchen, which seemed to hold little interest for him. Then I took him into the dining room, which was filled with my husband's work and my work—papers, photographs, boxes, and books. Next I took him through the first sitting room into the second sitting room, where I suggested that he sit down. I pointed out three of the fireplaces, but even this didn't interest him or get him to be more calm.

"Well, yes, this is perfect," he said. "What more could you want?"

"Bigger rooms. More rooms," I said.

"How expensive is a place like this?" he asked.

I made up a price I thought sounded reasonable.

"That's reasonable," he said.

"You and your brother could rent a little house, too."

"It wouldn't be feasible. We like to dine out."

"You wouldn't have to stay home just because you had a kitchen."

"Well, there are other reasons. For you it's different. You're a married couple. We need a different kind of situation—the opportunity to meet people."

"Meet people?" I said. I thought of all the people I'd met just going out of the door of this house.

"There's more chance for other kinds of things."

"What other things?" I asked. I didn't know what he meant.

"Well . . . female companionship," he said.

"Oh," I said. I was surprised to hear this phrase and to have to try to understand what it might mean in this case. While I was trying to pull myself together and recover from hearing these two words, "female companionship," I tried to formulate a sentence about the ease of meeting people wherever you were on a tiny island—a sentence like that. Then I tried to change the subject but realized that we were out of subjects. We had talked about every subject we'd ever be able to talk about.

The next and last time I saw the brothers was in East Hampton. It was that warm November evening last year, a year before the election. My husband and I were riding our bicycles by the town pond when I thought I saw the two men looking at some flowers planted along the walkway to an inn that looked out over the pond.

"Aren't those your friends?" my husband asked.

I didn't want to know what they were up to. They seemed to be scouting out the premises of the inn, checking the landscaping and the porch, and sizing up the inn itself. But they had a furtive way of doing this scouting, instead of walking right up the path and in the door. Probably they were trying to figure something out, like the quality of the inn and whether it might offer a chance of female companionship for them.

"They're not my friends," I told my husband.

He shook his head and made a cer-

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tain face as we continued our ride into the murky evening. We rode for an hour on a beautiful but dangerous lane where cars liked to speed on weekends and where we were once stopped by the actor Cliff Robertson, who asked us if we had seen a golden retriever. We said we hadn't, while pretending we didn't know that he was Cliff Robertson. We couldn't tell whether this was what he wanted or not.

When we got back to the pond it was almost dusk, but I could still see well enough to spot the brothers coming toward us from the direction of the beach.

"We have to say hello to your friends this time," my husband said.

After saying hello—they seemed happy to see us—the more talkative one asked where we were going. I said that we weren't going anywhere, we were on our way home. This time he seemed to want to know so badly where our house was that my husband said we had to meet friends for dinner in half an hour.

"You live around here?" the brother asked, looking at the large, beautiful old houses surrounding us.

"We live in the one small house in the neighborhood," I said. It was true.

Then came the usual conversation—how long can you stay, do you stay all winter, do you have to go to the city. I didn't expect anything about current events to come up, so the next question was a big surprise. "What did you think of the confirmation hearings?" the talkative brother asked.

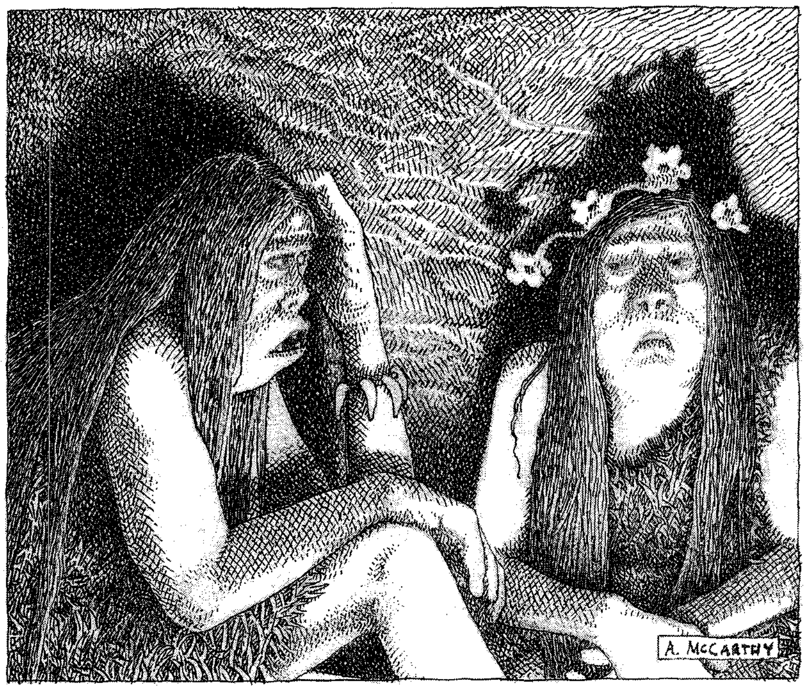
"Sickening," I said. I really began to feel sick.

"Wasn't it a disgusting spectacle?" he asked, looking at my husband.

"Don't ask him," I said. "He's on his way to the conservative side."

Both brothers looked at my husband with disbelief and little weird smiles.

"There was one conservative Democratic senator from Connecticut who voted no," I said.



"So the bartender says, 'We don't serve dogs in here,' and the guy says, 'I can't hear you, I've got a banana in my ear.' "

"He's an Orthodox Jew, too," the brother said.

"Is there a connection?" I asked.

"Maybe it gives him some moral decency," he said.

"What about Christians?" I said. "Jesus would have voted no."

"What do you think of our senators?" the other brother asked. "Aren't they deplorable?"

"We have to get rid of them," I said. "And the President, too."

"We must organize and defeat them," he said with feverish energy.

Then another surprise question.

"Will you be here Thanksgiving? Do you come here for Christmas?" the talkative one asked. Maybe they were planning a political event to help defeat the senators and President.

"Yes," I said. I decided right then and there that if I was ever going to be there for Thanksgiving, the brothers would be invited to a Thanksgiving vegetarian dinner. As I was trying to drum up a guest list from the few people we knew, most of whom, including us, had to go to small, grim family dinners, the brother said, "What about Christmas, what about Christmas?"

"We're always here," I said. "Aren't you?"

"No, we like to go someplace different. This year I thought I'd like to go somewhere in the Berkshires. To an inn up in Massachusetts or somewhere."

"That's a good idea," I said. "We did that once, before we lived here."

"You did? You went to the Berkshires? Was it nice?"

"Yes," I said. "Really nice. We were trying to decide whether to move up there."

"It was beautiful," my husband said, without feeling. He described a snowy winter scene in a standard way.

"Did you stay in an inn? Do you know any inns up there?" the brother asked.

"Yes," I said. "We stayed in Stockbridge. In a beautiful old inn. It was right before Christmas."

"Was it nice? Was the food good? Did they have a Christmas tree?"

"Yes, really good. They had a vegetable plate on the menu. It even had brown rice on it. They had a tree—a big tree."

"Was the food good?" the less interested, more subdued brother asked.

"You know what her idea of good is," my husband said.

"What kind of food do they serve?" the subdued brother asked.

"Normal American food," my husband said. "But healthier, because of the hippie influx of the seventies."

"And the Stockbridge School and the sanitarium," I said.

"Are there Christmas decorations? Do they have a nice tree?" the brother asked.

"Yes, beautiful decorations. A big tree," I said. I was getting worried.

"Is it in Lenox? Do you know any place in Lenox?"

"It's in Stockbridge. But there is one in Lenox. You can look in an inn book."

"What kind of people go there? Are there people you could have an intelligent conversation with? Are there congenial people?"

"There were nice people when we were

there in 1977." I remembered these people and realized that they were all talking to each other in the groups they'd gone to the inn with. A family dinner of eight. A group of six professors and doctors in tweed clothing. Grandmothers with white hair smiling at their families, out for pre-Christmas celebrations. I wondered what the chances were of any of these groups meeting up with the brothers. Did they want people to discuss the confirmation hearings with? The topic might be finished by December, I thought. The last time we'd stayed at an inn—a few weeks before—was at the height of that topic's popularity. We'd had to watch those hearings in the library of an inn in Maine, a library filled with old Republicans. In the inn's dining room a vegetable plate was served with sausages mixed into stewed tomatoes. We watched the hearings while waiting for the right day to meet Dr. Loquesto in his laboratory for a new technique of conception. In the laboratory the doctor became enraged when a machine didn't work, and he slammed out of the room before I could say, "Please hand me the *Times*." But maybe it was all for the best not to be reading that testimony while conception might be taking place. Instead, I could wonder how the surgeon's behavior had gotten to resemble the behavior of the crazed professor in "The Blue Angel."

"He's afraid the roads will be icy," the talkative brother said.

"But it never snows anymore," I said.

"Is there a train?" he asked. "Did you drive?"

"We drove," my husband said, "but the roads were clear. They're main roads."

"I don't like to drive in snow," the quieter brother said.

"It never snows," I said. "But whenever you're there it's already snowed a few days before."

"We wanted to see snow. Here it never snows," the talkative brother said.

"It snowed three feet two years ago," I said.

"Do you know any inns in Lenox?" he asked.

"We went there only one time and we stayed in Stockbridge," my husband said. "It was the only place we knew about." He was ready to pedal off, I could tell.

"What were the rooms like?"

"They were nice. Some were a little run-down. But it's all redone now," I said.

"Did they have Christmas decorations?"

"You mean you want to go to a place where it's really like Christmas?" I said.

"That's why we want to go. Here it's dreary, it's not like Christmas."

"Norman Rockwell lived there," I said.

"Were the decorations nice? The Christmas decorations? The tree?"

"Yes, yes, all those things. A big tree with ornaments," I said.

"Was it nice? Were the ornaments lovely?"

"Yes, yes. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to live there," I said.

CHRISTMAS
BOUTIQUE

"At the inn?" the more anxious brother asked.

"Yes, at the inn or in a house up there. Anything."

"Was it in Lenox?"

"No," I said, "Stockbridge." I didn't know what else to say.

"We better be going," my husband said. "Have a good trip."

"Yes," I said. "Go to the Berkshires. Look in an inn book."

"O.K.," the brother said.

The brother in the background sent a weak smile in my direction. The more active, agitated brother was all worn out. They were not dressed for the greenhouse weather I'd been noticing the whole time. They thought that because it was November they should wear crewneck sweaters over their shirts. They were wrong. The frantic brother was sweating during most of the conversation. The other brother had looked on with tolerance of his odd twin.

As we rode away, I said to my husband, "Well, what did you think of the brothers?"

"Those are some brothers," he said.

"What would their mother think if she could know what had become of them?" I asked.

"That's something for you to wonder."

"What went wrong? What was their childhood like? How did it happen?"

My husband shook his head. "I was afraid they wanted to come see our house," he said. "And I wanted to watch the end of the game."

"No, they just want to do something for Christmas. They have no families. They're not connected to any ways to celebrate. They're just trying to participate in the Christmas season. Isn't it sad?"

"I guess so."

"I hope they go away and have a good time."

"I hope so, too."

"Maybe we should have a dinner and invite them."

"Who else could we invite?"

"I can't think of anyone." I wished I could think of the right people. Some relatives of Bishop Fulton Sheen lived around the corner. I thought of them. We had our Swedish friends, but they'd be busy with some meatball festival. Maybe one of the co-managers of Discount Drugs would be free.

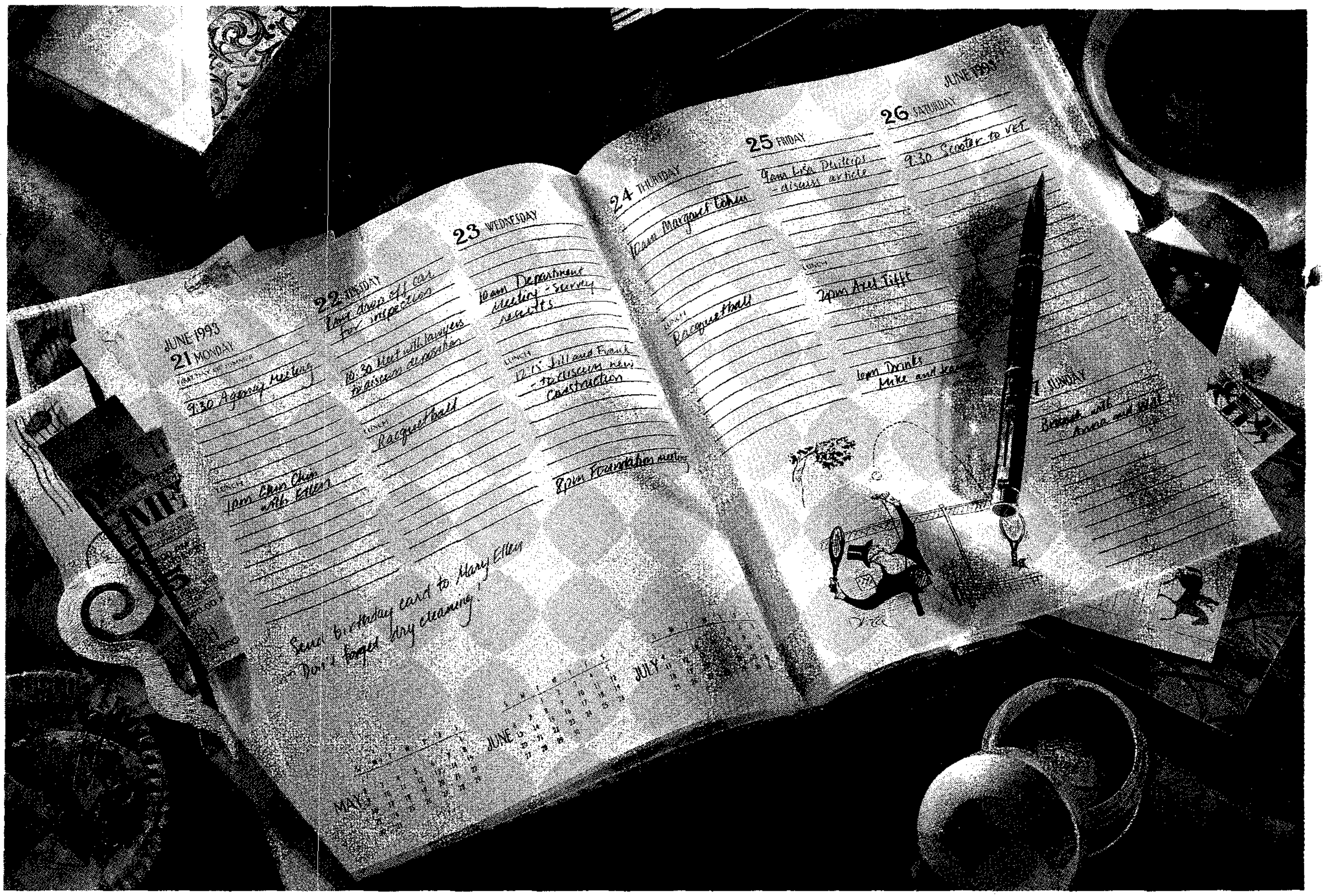
I thought about the brothers trying to participate in the Christmas season in the Berkshires, in Stockbridge or Lenox. I remembered how pleasant it was when we were there the last time, when we were a newly married young couple. I recalled the old Viennese psychiatrist saying to Ingrid Bergman in the Alfred Hitchcock film "Spellbound," "There's nothing so nice as a new marriage—no psychoses yet, no aggressions, no guilt complexes." I remembered the dining room and the families and the vegetable plate on the menu and the snow-covered hills and beautiful old houses and the cleared roads. The lock on our car door had frozen and my husband had to unfreeze it by lighting matches, one after another until he'd used up a whole book of matches with the inn's name printed on it. I remembered the Christmas tree and the faded old English china on the mantelpiece and on the tables all over the room. I pictured the whole room with the fireplace and the pine needles and the faded blue china everywhere. Just like a real American home is supposed to be at Christmas. I pictured the families and the big Christmas tree with the lovely ornaments.

"Maybe we should go up there for Christmas this year, too," I said.

"Where?" my husband asked. "Stockbridge?"

"Or Lenox. Anywhere. We went once. Remember? We had a good time." ◆

START EACH DAY WITH A SMILE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21 MONDAY
9:30 Agency Meeting
1pm Chin Chin with Ellen
22 TUESDAY
Leave down off car for inspection
10:30 Meet with lawyers to discuss acquisition
Racquetball
23 WEDNESDAY
10am Department meeting - Survey results
12:15 Jill and Frank to discuss new construction
8pm Foundation meeting
Send birthday card to Mary Ellen
Don't forget dry cleaning!
24 THURSDAY
10am Margaret Cohen
Racquetball
25 FRIDAY
26 SATURDAY
9:30 Scooter to vet
1pm Drinks
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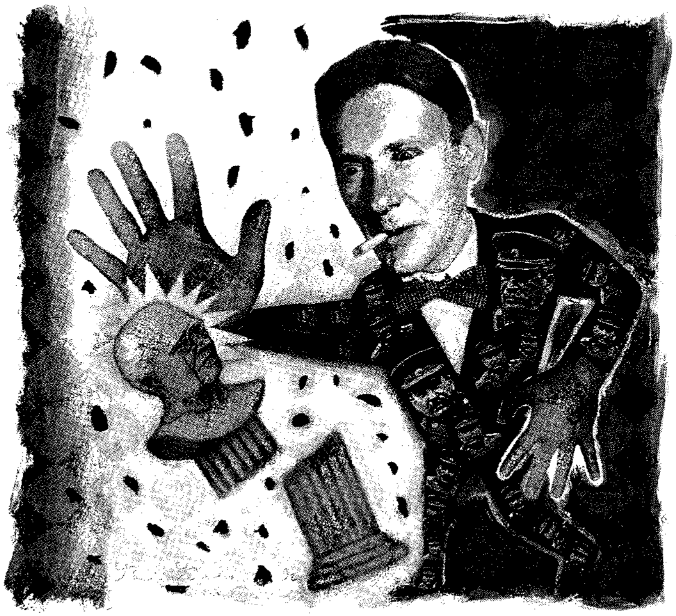
THE CRITICS

THE THEATRE

THE LONE WOLF AND THE RUSSIAN BEAR

by John Lahr

When a novelist discovers the theatre, he takes a ravishing but flighty mistress. The theatre can break your heart. No modern writer suffered for his theatrical passion more than Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), who emerged in the mid-nineteen-twenties as one of Moscow's finest playwrights only to lose his heart's delight to the caprice of the state. The Bolsheviks showed the bourgeoisie their ass; but in his 1926 hit "The Days of the Turbins," which dramatized the Bolshevik Revolution from the point of view of the Whites, not the Reds, Bulgakov showed them his face. He paid a price for not toeing the Party line. In 1926, his diaries and the typescript of his novel "The Heart of a Dog" were seized by the secret police. By 1929, all productions of his five plays had been banned and public readings of his work prohibited. Bulgakov wrote to Maxim Gorky that he had not a kopeck, not a play, not a job offer, not a line in print. He signed off one letter that year ruefully, "Yours until the grave (which is not too far off)." To a writer, Bulgakov said, "not being allowed to write is tantamount to being buried alive." In a gesture typical of the pugnacity, bravery, and dopey perseverance that characterized his nervy nature, Bulgakov wrote a letter to the Soviet government admitting "deep skepticism about the Revolutionary process" and asking "Am I thinkable in the U.S.S.R.?" He cited as evidence his clippings album, which contained three hundred and one references over a ten-year period, and noted, "Of these, three were complimentary, and 298 were hostile and abusive. These 298 reflect, as in a mirror, my life as a writer."



Method Madness: In "Black Snow," Mikhail Bulgakov satirizes the joys and horrors of his collaboration with Konstantin Stanislavsky.

Demanding that he be allowed to leave Russia or that his "virtuoso knowledge of the stage" be put to use, Bulgakov sent seven letters to various Soviet leaders. Only one replied. On April 18, 1930, just as Bulgakov was lying down for a postprandial nap, Joseph Stalin telephoned him. Stalin (who was to see "The Days of the Turbins" fifteen times in the next decade) listened, and then gave the nod to the famous Moscow Arts Theatre and secured Bulgakov a job as assistant director and, subsequently, occasional actor and adapter. But what began in hope ended in hate. Bulgakov's hilarious unfinished roman à clef "Black Snow," which offers, among many pleasures, the only extant poison-pen portrait of the Moscow Arts Theatre's co-founder Konstantin Stanislavsky and his Method, is a testament to both his passion and his pain. Between the beginning of his employment by the Moscow Arts Theatre and his death, Bulgakov wrote five plays, four opera librettos, a biography of Molière, and two novels, including his masterpiece, "The Master and Margarita," but in his lifetime only his adaptation of Gogol's "Dead Souls" and a blighted run of his play "Molière" reached the public. The novels had to wait until 1965 to be published. And now, fifty-five years after Bulgakov ceased work on "Black Snow," the satiric message in the bottle has happily washed up for the first time on our shores, in a faithful, svelte adaptation by British playwright Keith Dewhurst, and has been decoded by the marvellous Surrealist imagination of Britain's boldest young director, Richard Jones, at the Loeb Drama Center, in Cambridge, which houses Robert Brustein's American Repertory Theatre.

On opening day, with fifteen minutes

to go before the end of the last rehearsal, the director, an unprepossessing thirty-nine-year-old, stood, in a blue work shirt, checking his watch and waving his hand over the large model of the Moscow Arts Theatre, which was positioned at the side of the stage and allowed audiences to imagine not just what it looked like but, by its variously lighted windows, in what rooms the play's conversations were taking place. "Could we have some more snow?" Jones asked someone on the lighting board. "It should snow on the theatre." Snow, with its associations of purity and chill, was an apt metaphor of the contradictions in Bulgakov's enormous literary endeavor. Black snow, referring to the blood of a murdered man from which the would-be playwright in the piece gets his title, was an exact correlative of the violence done to Bulgakov's creative life by the M.A.T., which he called "the graveyard of my plays." Jones turned back to the stage: a shallow white box stretching the forty-foot width of the proscenium, it exaggerates the cramped quarters and the few emblematic objects (chaise longue, books, clock) of Bulgakov's writer-spokesman, Maksudov, into a dreamlike de Chirico corridor where the words that fill his mind are scrawled not just on paper but on the floorboards and the walls around his writing table. Jones, who admits to "being obsessed by pictures of Meyerhold's work," is also devoted to staging a kind of playful kinetic theatre that embraces Meyerhold's rebellion against the grave immobility of Stanislavsky's naturalism, in which, Meyerhold wrote, "the actor has no need of the juggler's art, because he no longer 'plays' but simply 'lives' on the stage." Jones matches Bulgakov's originality with a startling stylization that yokes the familiar and the strange. For those who have followed Jones's sensational, award-winning productions in Europe (David Hirson's "La Bête," Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods," Corneille's "The Illusion"), the sharp angularity and daring artificiality of Antony McDonald's fine set bear all the characteristic Jones thumbprints. Giddy with rage, Bulgakov fiercely distorted his backstage portraits into caricature, which turned his skepticism into high style. Jones's scenic distortions match this literary aggression with weird Expressionist stage pictures, whose absence of depth broadcasts the triumph of surface over psychology, the extraordinary over the mundane, satire over sentiment. Some farsighted American city fathers looking for world-class theatre should just give Jones an auditorium (plus an administrator) and let him get on with what he does best, which is being brilliant. His productions shine with inventiveness, and "Black Snow" is no exception.

Robert Brustein, who has given a home to such varied talents as Robert Wilson, Andrei Serban, and Peter Sellars (Sellars directed his first professional show at the A.R.T. while he was a senior at Harvard), is responsible for luring Jones to Boston. Brustein himself arrived fourteen years ago, from Yale, and has been fighting the good fight for a challenging, eclectic theatre in a town that has traditionally been a tryout stop for Broadway and has proved itself notoriously unreceptive to the progressive theatrical arts. David Wheeler's Theatre Company of Boston, founded in 1963, had a shelf life of twelve years. The Charles Theatre Company also had a few seasons. Now that the Huntington Theatre does the commercial staples of Stoppard, Shaw, Gilbert and Sullivan, and American musicals—the last a form of entertainment of which Brustein is not overfond (although his office trophies include a plaque that reads, "American Express Applauds George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, and Robert Brustein")—the A.R.T. is free to pursue a more radical path, which Brustein has outlined in such books as "The Theatre of Revolt," "Reimagining American Theatre," and "Who Needs Theatre." During the last rehearsal of "Black Snow," Brustein, a tall, mustachioed sixty-five-year-old, lurked in the back of the theatre, an éminence in two tweedy shades of grise. "We've built up a subscription audience of more than ten thousand," he said. "It's a great audience. Adventurous. Vocal. The median age is thirty-four, one of the youngest in the country. We consider the audience the final actor in the production."

"Tom," Jones said, peering over the square wire rims of his glasses up at

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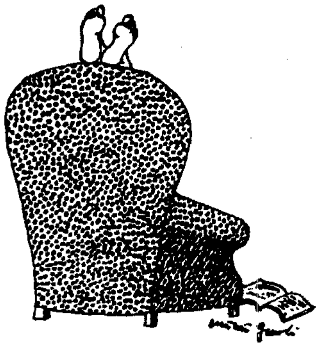

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the light board. "Could you just pulse it to see if the snow works?"

"We play to ninety-two per cent capacity," Brustein said, losing concentration as the snow finally descended with the proper density.

With that, Jones declared himself finished with rehearsal. He grabbed two festively wrapped opening-night presents and marched up the raked aisle to the back seats, where we huddled. "I can't imagine what the American audience will make of this," he said, the edges of his mouth rising to a smile. "There's no sexual relationship in it. The main relation is between a man and his work. I don't think you can imagine that in an American play, really."

"Richard Jones to the Donut, please!" The loudspeaker was calling the director to the reception area at the side of the dishabille theatre. Boxes of promotional literature lined the side walls, and a crate of dead beer bottles seemed to have taken up permanent residence under the stairway.

"Russians are very special, aren't they?" Jones said. "They talk a lot about 'soul.' When I was there, they'd say these kind of really spiritual things. They'd sort of look at you and say, 'I see you have the eyes of a poet.' It would completely floor you. That's partly why Russian things are so hard to assimilate in this culture. I think it's hard for an American actor to fantasize himself into the very Russian frame of mind. 'Either I write this novel or I commit suicide.' As long as he can create, he can live. It's a critical thing. Americans are used to saying what they feel."

"It's like what Philip Roth said," Brustein piped up. "In the Soviet Union, nothing is allowed and everything matters. In the United States, everything is allowed and nothing matters."

While many plays about theatricals mine the hilarity of actors' narcissism ("Hay Fever," "Noises Off," "The Seagull"), Bulgakov's is unique in taking the audience comically into what Chekhov called "the haze" of a writer's life. Here concentration warps time and space, and the rumpled solitary is visited by weird apparitions and overheard voices, to whom he unabashedly talks and which he tries to chronicle. "Bulgakov's a great imaginist," said Jones. "For that reason, he has to be a good writer for the theatre." Jones embraces Bulgakov's visionary spirit, and his theatrical sleight of hand powerfully conjures the no man's land between the heaven of a writer's imagination and the hell of his inadequacy. Maksudov enters, "white" with fatigue. His books burst into flame. His writing table glows white as he reënters the world of his failed novel to salvage it as a play. "They've come out of the pages," Maksudov says of the characters of his novel, with whom he can't bear parting. "But if I write down whatever I see in the box it will not fade. The people will not run away from me." Maksudov trails his characters like Chekhov's Trigorin, "not knowing what I'm writing half the time." We are immediately submerged in the tumult of his mind: gunshots, the magnified sound of the ticking clock and the scratching pen, the shock of real sunlight and real voices. But when an excerpt of Maksudov's novel gets him a contract with the "Independent Theatre" (read Moscow Arts Theatre), he happily trades the lacerations of the soul for the frustrations of collaboration. To Maksudov, as to so many before and after him, the theatre is an answer to the novelist's silent prayers both for applause and for company.

"For the first time in my life I am beholding a reader!" Maksudov says of the M.A.T.'s dramaturge. The theatre promises Maksudov both the irresistible, sensual thrill of his words incarnated and a public whose responses he can see. A novelist rarely sees his readers take pleasure in his work, or walk out on it. But in the theatre the encounter with the public is as immediate and dangerous as a stolen kiss. Bulgakov teases the Moscow Arts Theatre's messianic dedication to art (portraits of the greats of Western literature are interspersed with those of the theatre's artistic team), while showing Maksudov's delight at the flamboyant, temperamental characters and power plays that make the place a hothouse both of wonder and of waste. Jones brilliantly depicts the would-be playwright's poignant first glimpse of the backstage world as the actors take their bows upstage to a volley of applause. And when the playwright encounters Ivan

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Vasilyevich (a.k.a. Stanislavsky) Jones engineers an automated cat that darts across the stage like an electronic hare at a dog track, pulling down Vasilyevich's curtain and adding another delicious touch to the fiasco of their first meeting. In Bulgakov's portrait, Stanislavsky, here shrewdly sketched by the A.R.T. veteran Alvin Epstein, is a hypochondriacal, vindictive windbag with a distaste for gunshots and a knack for steering a script into shallow waters. He wants Maksudov, for instance, to change his crucial scene from a shooting to an offstage stabbing. "The government aren't going to pat me on the back for letting Strizh rake the theatre with gunfire, are they?" the great director says, referring to the hated putative director of Maksudov's show, whom Ivan Vasilyevich later successfully undermines. Stanislavsky's Method aspired to create the new actor who would mesh easily with the new Marxist-Leninist man, liberated from the bad old habits of the past in order to call into being a new, disciplined, enlightened inner self. "A real artist must lead a full, interesting, varied and exciting life," Stanislavsky wrote in "An Actor Prepares." "He must be an ideal human being . . . capable of reaching the high points of his epoch . . . of reflecting the spiritual cravings of his contemporaries." The revolution that Stanislavsky wanted was internal and posed no threat to the state.

But in Bulgakov's argument the M.A.T., which in 1936 withdrew his "Molière" after seven performances—despite five years of rehearsal and twenty-two opening-night curtain calls—because of a bad review in *Pravda*, was a real threat to the writer's freedom. "In your play," Vasilyevich says to Maksudov, in a line tweaking the M.A.T.'s institutional temerity, "you must not pray to God but to art." Maksudov, like Bulgakov himself, invests his self-expression with an almost religious zeal. "I have been the one and only literary wolf," Bulgakov wrote to Stalin, about his refusal to tailor his plays along Soviet ideological lines. "Whether a wolf dyes his fur or has it clipped, he will still look nothing like a poodle." "Black Snow" bears satiric witness to the stifling of an author's literary freedom by the vainglorious demands of management. Ivan Vasilyevich's interminable études during rehearsal (including a hilarious exhibition of how someone in love rides a bike), his time-wasting demand for specious rewrites, and his love of theatrical anecdote try Maksudov's patience just as they did Bulgakov's. When Stanislavsky took over rehearsals of "Molière" in the fourth year, Bulgakov was spitting spiders to his diary: "In the presence of the actors, he began to tell me all about the fact that Molière was a genius, and how this genius ought to be depicted in the play. The actors licked their lips in glee and began to ask that their parts be made larger." Bulgakov fought like fury to keep "the capacious cup of my patience" from overflowing. The joke in "Black Snow" is that Maksudov never gets his play performed. "If you could act," the exasperated Maksudov tells the histrionic Lyudmila, who keeps interrupting with her shows of temperament, "you wouldn't need a Method!" The process takes over, the pages fly up, and Maksudov is finally brought down. The evening ends in fine satiric symmetry. Having begun with a botched suicide over his failed novel, Maksudov finally achieves suicide with his unproduced play. Playwrights will know the feeling.

"The genuine grotesque," Stanislavsky wrote, "is the best kind of art." Bulgakov's theatrical gargoyles require a bold, distinctive, comic playing that can establish a character in quick strokes and fill it with personality. The A.R.T. can't quite flesh out "Black Snow" with uniformly accomplished comic cameos. But Derek Smith, as Maksudov, gets the naïveté, if not the dyspepsia, in the writer's beleaguered nature. Candy Buckley, as a telephonist and typist extraordinaire, and Patti Allison, who, as Ivan's old aunt, dodders across the stage carrying a pug whose face has a droll similarity to her own, rise to just the right level of outrageous comic attack. Having outlasted Stalin's purges, the K.G.B., and *Pravda*, "Black Snow" will survive the blinkered local Boston press, who missed the fun of it. But no matter. The smart A.R.T. audience got it. Another production of "Black Snow" (with an American adaptation by Keith Reddin) is scheduled in the spring at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. The literary wolf is here for keeps. ♦

TURKEY

by Edith Oliver

"SINCE the play is little more than a study of how two veterans in the arts can mess up the lives of two beginners, all that we have to do is sit back and watch them do it . . . " Thus Robert Benchley, master of the minuscule synopsis, in a review for this magazine of a production of "The Seagull" in 1938; the sentence continues, in case you care, ". . . and Miss Fontanne and Mr. Lunt do a lovely job of messing-up." In the National Actors Theatre's aimless "Seagull," which opened recently at the Lyceum, there's not much to sit back and watch. Under Marshall W. Mason's direction, the messers-up and their victims go by the board; all the pleasures—and there are a few—are peripheral. I can't remember a better Masha (in my collected "Seagulls") than Maryann Plunkett, discoursing on her despair and knocking back the vodka and, incidentally, looking beautiful, and I also admired Joan MacIntosh as her mother, Polina; John Franklyn-Robbins as old Uncle Sorin, in his wheelchair; and Tony Roberts as Dr. Dorn—these actors, perhaps, being outside the director's orbit. If you feel that Mr. Mason's credentials are too good for this abrupt dismissal, I agree, but there's nothing I can do about it. At any rate, the principals, for the record, are Tyne Daly, miscast as Mme. Arkadina and atrociously costumed; Jon Voight, who should have been right for Trigorin but isn't; Ethan Hawke as poor Konstantin, dramatist manqué; and Laura Linney, a charming, but in this instance a hapless, Nina, the seagull herself.

The play is probably strong enough to survive any performance, though on this occasion I noticed, for the first time, that Chekhov here sometimes shows his hand as a beginner, by including a few raw chunks of information in his heavenly dialogue. The translation, which sounded O.K., was by David French, and the good settings were designed by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg and lighted by Richard Nelson.

MOVE down a few blocks and way over west to the Harold Clurman, where the Willow Cabin Theatre Company is presenting "Wilder, Wilder, Wilder: Three Plays by Thornton." They are one-acters. "The Long Christmas Dinner" covers ninety years in the life of a family named Bayard, as one by one they enter, sometimes as babies, take their places at the Christmas table, and then quietly exit, often unnoticed, through a portal, at stage right, to death. Their conversation sets them in time and type: they are old-fashioned, and stay that way—for all ninety years, calling one another Mother Bayard and Uncle Brandon and Cousin Ermengarde, and they are country people. "Pullman Car Hiawatha" is set aboard a train en route from New York to Chicago, and it is the most elaborate of the three, foreshadowing both "Our Town" (there is a Stage Manager, who brings each scene to a close; and a woman passenger dying of a heart attack says farewell, in Emily's voice, to the people and places she has loved) and "The Skin of Our Teeth," with its abstract aspirations (among the voices heard are those of the fields going by and the planets in the heavens). "The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden," which is set in the middle, is the star in this triple crown. We accompany a family in moderate circumstances and of beautiful innocence—a mother and father and their two young children, played by adults—as they ride in the family car (four chairs, two by two) from their home, in Newark, to visit a daughter, in Camden, whose baby has just died at birth. Again, there is a Stage Manager, assuming a role or two as need be. Here the art of Wilder can be seen in its purest form, in which everything is made to seem incidental; the members of the family even look alike, and the play is performed flawlessly, as are the other two, under the direction of Edward Berkeley. The actors are relatively inexperienced, but all of them are gifted. The show being Wilder, the settings, needless to say, are all but nonexistent and the props are minimal. The play's the thing—or, in this instance, the plays. They are a credit to the dramatist and, incidentally, to the memory of Clurman. ♦

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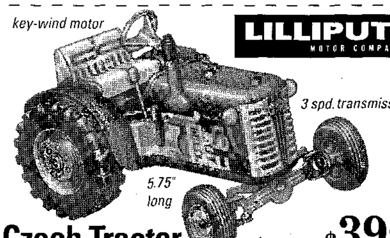
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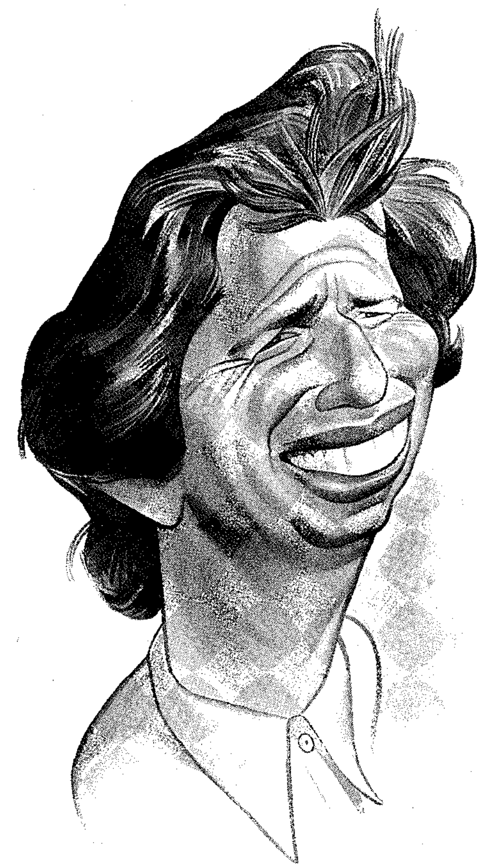
ON TELEVISION

PSEUDO VÉRITÉ

by James Wolcott

THE show business that Ethel Merman extolled is a thing of the past. There's no traditional show biz anymore—only insider show biz. Reports from the set, sneak-preview results, rumors of reshoots, satellite hookups with the stars, Monday-morning tallies of the weekend grosses, and instant think pieces supply a daily bowl of dish. The media now tell us so much about every product in the pipeline that the end result is often redundant. It's like being force-fed a meal that's been prechewed. Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula" isn't so much a classic bloodsucker as an acid flashback of its own hype. Every hot item becomes magnified and bent in a fish-eye lens. The chariot race among the three networks to rush Amy Fisher's story to prime time has taken on a dynamic that's outstripped the details of the case, as the actresses playing Amy compete for the title Teen-Age Slut of the Year. (My money's on Drew Barrymore.) Audiences don't seem to mind the letdown of the actual movie, book, album, TV show. They may even enjoy being conned. Getting worked up over nothing is better than feeling left out of the loop.



Garry Shandling: His guardedness gives "The Larry Sanders Show" a quirky subsurface rare on television.

"The Jackie Thomas Show" (Tuesdays, ABC) prides itself on being an up-front con job. It trades on our awareness of its star, Tom Arnold, and our awareness of the sitcoms it's semi-trashing. It's quite a self-referential little package of pugnacity. The early line on Tom Arnold was that he was a no-talent lowlife leeching off the success of his wife, Roseanne. As a standup comic, he left the impression of a big thumb. It was Roseanne's muscle that secured her husband's show the envied time slot after her hit series. The episode of "Roseanne" preceding the première of "Jackie Thomas" found Roseanne's sitcom family slouched in front of the TV complaining about "Coach" (the previous tenant) being moved to make room for this geek from another dimension. The in-jokes keep on cloning.

Arnold's Jackie Thomas is a sitcom star who spits out writers faster than Roseanne does. Planted in the series première is a framed photograph of Dick Van Dyke, whose "Dick Van Dyke Show" was also about a team of comedy writers trying to placate a pressure-cooker boss, Carl Reiner's Alan Brady. (There's also a whiff of the film "My Favorite Year.") Braving the cannibal policy toward the staff is Jackie Thomas's new head writer, Jerry Harper (Dennis Boutsikaris), bearded and hip and on the rebound. He waits, as do we, to meet his new boss. Spoken of in fear and awe, Jackie Thomas is given an offscreen buildup befitting King

Kong. When Jerry is finally ushered into his lair, which resembles a luxury prison cell, Jackie is pumping iron and breathing hard. Tattoos lizard both arms. Knocking back some bottled water, he says, "Man, I could go for a beer. But I won't, because I just got out of rehab. You play golf? Me, neither." Getting down to business, Jackie has just one tiny request for his new head writer: he wants his adorable TV son, Chas, wrapped around the nearest tree. "I want him killed in this week's show. I want him dead, I want to hear screams, I want to see flames, and I want to smell his burning flesh. And if you can't do it I'll find someone who can."

In the past, temperamental stars in backstage comedies conceived of themselves as larger than life. The Barrymore-like clan of "The Royal Family" roared with such fustian that playing Shakespeare seemed a step down for them. Carl Reiner's Alan Brady addressed his array of hairpieces as if it were a gathering of henchmen. Arnold's Jackie Thomas has no such bravura. Despite his size and ego, everything he does is diddly. His eyes are everywhere and nowhere. Behaving like a puppy about to wet itself was Arnold's specialty on "Roseanne," where he played a cocky loser who badly wanted to belong. His tendency to oversell his twitch was kept in check by the blanket calm of John Goodman. Now that he's fronting his own series, he seems more intent on proving that he can be a star, too, than on creating a character with individual DNA. His hotdogging makes his co-stars cower. Not that he seems to care—he's aiming for a direct hookup with the audience. He seems to be saying, "I know you think I'm a load. If I act like an even bigger load, we can all pretend this is an exercise in self-mockery. Want to see my butt?" I suppose he earns points for not trying to be likable. His populist ploy has certainly paid off so far. The "Jackie Thomas" début racked up big ratings, supported by positive reviews. (The few negative reviewers found themselves the target of Roseanne's gay-baiting *fatwa* by fax.) That same week, he hosted "Saturday Night Live." By now, media watchers are falling over themselves to sell the news that he's not some chump riding Roseanne's coattails—he's a Gifted Performer in His Own Right. Possibly, but his oversell isn't much fun. Even in an echo-chamber era, "The Jackie Thomas Show" is too self-refracting. It exists solely to monitor itself. TV mirroring TV has limited resonance. There's energy loss in the constant ricochet.

HBO's "The Larry Sanders Show," starring Garry Shandling, confronts the same pitfall. The difference is that "Larry Sanders," which goes behind the scenes of a network talk show, offers the fake grit of pseudo vérité. Each episode features snippets of Larry's monologues, interviews with celebrity guests (Robin Williams riffing in an avocado suit, Richard Simmons running around in hysterics), panicky conferences in the hall in which the camera hovers as if it had just happened upon the scene. It's the most inside of inside shows; its conversations are conducted in code. The studio maze where "Larry Sanders" is taped fosters a bunker mentality. It's like watching the cast of Robert Altman's "The Player" working one level of an ant farm.

The cameo appearances sometimes cloy. Guest star Dana Carvey, assuring Larry that he wouldn't be competing with him on the late-night shift, had a dinky cuteness. Others are too eager to prove they're good sports. But some show unforeseen comic flair: flirting on and off the air with Larry, Mimi Rogers does the lambada with her lips. And the regular cast offers solid backup. Larry's talent coördinator, Paula (Janeane Garofalo), is a telephone line with a body attachment. As Larry's producer, Arthur, Rip Torn wrings his hands like a mortician, looking somewhat dug up himself. The true wonder is Jeffrey Tambor. As Larry's Ed McMahon-like sidekick and pitchman Hank, whose catchphrase is "Hey, now," Tambor occupies the sofa like a Buddha in his shrine, moving in and out of his body in mellow segues.

It's Hank's hucksterism that leads to a showdown in the best episode of the series—indeed, the best half hour of comedy this season outside "The Simpsons." One night, Larry glances over to discover that Hank has nodded off during an interview. It's the last straw. With all those outside endorsements, Hank's mind hasn't been on the show for ages; now he can't even stay awake. "Of course he was asleep, he's a fucking moron, what do you expect?" Arthur explains. But, instead of confronting Hank rationally, Larry pulls rank and ridicules him. In the dressing room, he notes Hank squeezing into a corset: "You look a little like Kitty in 'Gunsmoke.' " The needling spirals into outright hostility. Previous episodes of "Larry Sanders" had been slackly paced, but this one (directed by Ken Kwapis) had such lunge it could barely stay on the leash. As musical guest Janet Jackson circles the airport, unable to land, Larry presses his hands against the wall, trying to center himself. On the air, he's forced to extend a segment with a dog therapist. The entire show is taking on the sallow look of death. In desperation, he calls on Hank, and, with slow, deliberate, transparent expertise (it's like watching a cake rise), Hank—Tambor—bails the segment out of the ditch, telling bonehead anecdotes at his own expense until the whole panel is playing along. Afterward, an appreciative Larry apologizes to Hank. "I've turned into an asshole the last couple years," he says. He makes it sound as if it's become part of the job.

Shandling's guardedness gives "The Larry Sanders Show" a quirky subsurface rare on television (in movies, too, for that matter). The infighting allows Shandling to display mysterious flexes of mood. Faced with a meddling network exec or a pushy reporter, Shandling deploys a slight wince in his eyes as his crinkly smile loses its toehold on sincerity. He gets amazing gradations into the measure of each word; his hesitancies carry more message units than Tom Arnold's ape-man antics. Even though "Larry Sanders" seems to be simply a trompe-l'oeil satire of show biz, it feeds off a real frustration that performers feel—the inability to be left creatively alone. Producers resent talent; they always find a way to interfere. When a female network biggie tries to bring Larry to heel, Arthur warns her, "I killed a man like you in Korea." It's war, us against them, the troops versus the suits. Where "The Jackie Thomas Show" is an ego trip based on the desire to become America's most beloved asshole, "The Larry Sanders Show" is a small-unit guerrilla campaign to retain one's artistry and remain a reasonable facsimile of a human being. There's a worried mind enmeshed in this machine. ◆

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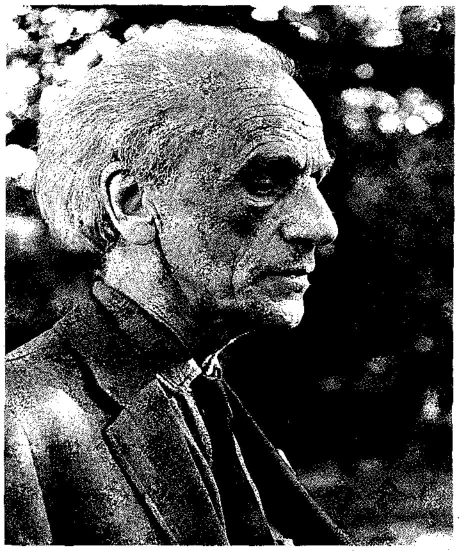
JOSEPH CORNELL: NAKED IN ARCADIA

by Edward Hirsch

It often comes as a shock to recall that one of the greatest American artists of this century could, by his own admission, neither draw nor paint. Joseph Cornell didn't make lithographs, sculpt marble, or mold clay. He never attended art school; he had no teachers. He was a collector of bits and scraps, a self-taught virtuoso of childhood, an Emersonian seer who earned a living by selling woollen samples, and who spent much of his time scavenging in junk shops and bookstores in quest of the perfect image, the ideal associative chain. He was, by all accounts, excruciatingly shy, a devout Christian Scientist, a solitary who loved penny arcades, Romantic ballerinas, Dutch art, French poetry. As a master of collage, that quintessentially modernist form, he was a representative twentieth-century artist, but there is plenty of evidence to indicate that he saw himself as a nineteenth-century figure marooned in the wrong time. He was a symbolist poet in disguise, a miniaturist who created his lifework in the basement of a modest frame house in Queens that he shared with his mother and an invalid brother. He did not make, as was first said, "toys for adults"; he made time capsules for eternity.


Visions of Cornell: Charles Simic's "Dime-Store Alchemy" is an ode to his magical art.

There is something about Cornell's oneiric, homemade work that inspires intimacy, affection, and awe. "We all live in his enchanted forest," John Ashbery wrote in "The Cube Root of Dreams," an appreciation of Cornell's 1967 show at the Guggenheim, and the sentiment resounds. Cornell's descendants include Pop and conceptual artists, entire schools of assemblagists, the last Surrealists, some minimalists—indeed, anyone who cares for mysteries made palpable in a fragile visual space. One detects his energizing influence in the stories of Donald Barthelme and Guy Davenport (masters of bric-a-brac and erudition), the experimental movies of Stan Brakhage and Rudy Burckhardt (each collaborated on Cornell's moody, collagist films), the poems of Ashbery and Frank O'Hara (both of whom treat the city as a palimpsest and dwell amid the detritus of language and culture).

Cornell is the most literary of visual artists. His work occupies the shifting, evanescent terrain between word and image, the verbal and the plastic. Both Duchamp and Mondrian considered him a poet; Harold Rosenberg called the shadow boxes "object poems." And poets themselves, the most studious and self-conscious of daydreamers, have always been mesmerized by Cornell's wondrous sea chests. In 1945, Marianne Moore wrote, "His use of early masters and engravers, the sense of design in his wall-paper specimens, and of romance in his choice of woodcuts, his consistent rigor of selection, constitute, *it seems to me, a phase of poetry.*" Dore Ashton has suggested that Cornell's work expresses what was once termed a "poetic soul," and her exemplary collection "A Joseph Cornell Album" (1974) includes four poems dedicated to Cornell: an Ashbery "Pantoum," Stanley Kunitz's "The Crystal Cage" (itself part of a Cornell-like collage), Rich-

and Howard's remarkable confession "Closet Drama" ("The tiny is the last refuge of the tremendous," he writes), and Octavio Paz's "Objects and Apparitions," splendidly translated by Elizabeth Bishop. Paz speaks of Cornell's constructions as "cages for infinity" and as places where "things hurry away from their names," and he concludes:

> Joseph Cornell: inside your boxes
> my words become visible for a moment.

CHARLES SIMIC'S new work of prose, "Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell" (Ecco; $19.95), is the most sustained literary response thus far to Cornell's boxes, montages, and films. It is a poet's book: incisive, freewheeling, dramatic—a mixture of evocation and observation, as lucid and shadowy as the imagination it celebrates. Simic wears his learning lightly. "I have a dream in which Joseph Cornell and I pass each other on the street," he begins, and that sentence—that dream—sets the tone for what follows: a personal quest to approach Cornell through the urban milieu, to encounter and exalt his spirit. Simic writes, "Somewhere in the city of New York there are four or five still-unknown objects which belong together. Once together they'll make a work of art. That's Cornell's premise, his metaphysics, and his religion, which I wish to understand."

"Dime-Store Alchemy" tracks Cornell from a unique angle. Simic—an American poet born in Belgrade and weaned on Surrealism; a writer with an antenna for paradox and a penchant for philosophy; an antic, skeptical visionary ("What a mess!" he has written. "I believe in images as vehicles of transcendence, but I don't believe in God!")—is one of Cornell's most unlikely and most genuine literary heirs. For years, the poet tells us, he tried to approximate Cornell's method, to "make poems from found bits of language." He brings to his task a desire to pursue the collagist's ideas and strategies, and a confirmed sense that he is dealing with "an American artist worthy of imitation." The result is a compact book with a large reach, a work that goes on reverberating, like a Duchamp "readymade" or a Mallarmé sonnet.

The book consists of sixty short texts—diverse "illuminations," notebook entries arranged in associative rather than linear fashion, paragraphs put together in tonal blocks that accrue into an homage and a portrait. It is an appreciative assemblage of reveries and meditations, vignettes, memories, lists, and prose poems, quotations from Cornell's copious diaries, and descriptions of the artist's work—his working method—which often read like parables. The pieces range from acute, fairly straightforward mini-essays on Cornell's modernist aims to highly evocative and uncanny responses to the collagist's ideas. Sometimes the two modes are combined, as in "These Are Poets Who Service Church Clocks," which begins with the sociological language "Many people have already speculated about the relationship between play and the sacred" and rises to the ultimate symbolist notion: "Silence is that vast, cosmic church in which we always stand alone. Silence is the only language God speaks."

Simic characteristically proceeds by peering into Cornell's constructions and then describing not only what he sees but where it leads him. "Perhaps the ideal way to observe the boxes is to place them on the floor and lie down beside them," he writes in "Poetics of Miniature," and one pictures him doing precisely that. In this way he becomes a solitary onlooker in a tiny memory theatre, gazing at a floodlit stage where time has been permanently suspended. The curtain goes up on a strange play already in progress—Cornell's boxes, like his films, begin *in medias res*—and the viewer is immediately thrust into a dream world. Simic is so deeply immersed in Cornell's universe that at times he looks right past the actors and into the realm Cornell termed "backstage"—that is, his imagination. In the one-paragraph entry "Cigars Clamped Between Their Teeth" Simic writes:

> I've read that Goethe, Hans Christian Andersen, and Lewis Carroll were managers of their own miniature theaters. There must have been many other such playhouses in the world. We study the history and literature of the period, but we know nothing about these plays that were being performed for an audience of one.

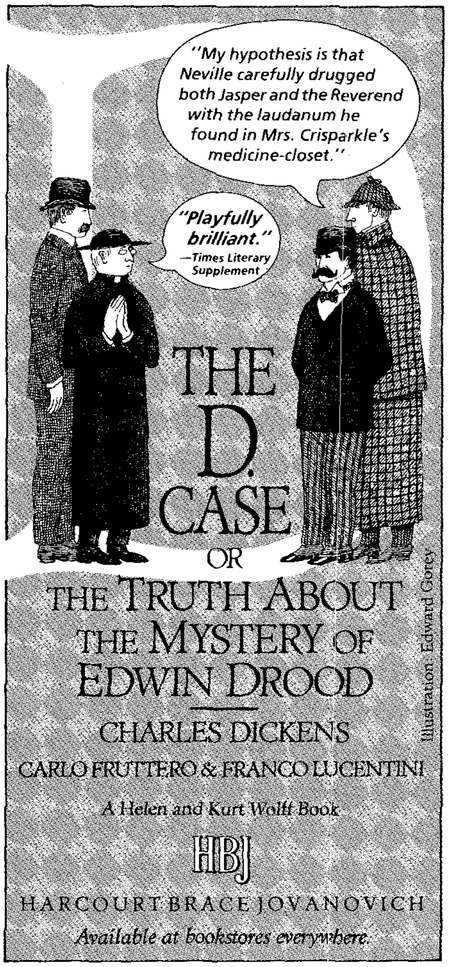
He intrudes into Cornell's private sanctum in order to re-create the aura of just such shadow plays.

Simic's response to Cornell is often intuitive and oblique. His meditation may yield an equivalent mood, a kind of light, the look of a place that articulates a parallel reality. Here is "The Magic Study of Happiness":

> In the smallest theater in the world the bread crumbs speak. It's a mystery play on the subject of a lost paradise. Once there was a kitchen with a table on which a few crumbs were left. Through the window you could see your young mother by the fence talking to a neighbor. She was cold and kept hugging her thin dress tighter and tighter. The clouds in the sky sailed on as she threw her head back to laugh.
>
> Where the words can't go any further—there's the hard table. The crumbs are watching you as you in turn watch them. The unknown in you and the unknown in them attract each other. The two unknowns are like illicit lovers when they're exceedingly and unaccountably happy.

This is Simic's own miniature theatre, in which inanimate bread crumbs—the poor leftovers—come to life and speak. It's a fairy-tale kitchen drama that moves offstage to recall a moment of intense domestic happiness, a voyeuristic glimpse of the vulnerable, joyous young mother. This entire scene seems inspired by a constellation of perceptions about the size, scale, and staging of Cornell's work, its deep reverence for the innocence of childhood as well as its Proustian feeling for involuntary memory, for paradise lost and magically recaptured. It illuminates the work's ecstatic, inward nature, how it slips into a range beyond language. What is crucial in Simic's second paragraph is how the solitudes meet and communicate with each other—the secret communion between actor and audience. He dramatizes the way Cornell's boxes activate something immense, lonely, hidden, and almost illicit in the viewer, speaking to him or her with a poignant, blissful intimacy.

AS in his poems, Simic's style in "Dime-Store Alchemy" is deceptively offhand and playful, moving fluently between the frontal statement



"My hypothesis is that Neville carefully drugged both Jasper and the Reverend with the laudanum he found in Mrs. Crisparkle's medicine-closet."
"Playfully brilliant." —Times Literary Supplement

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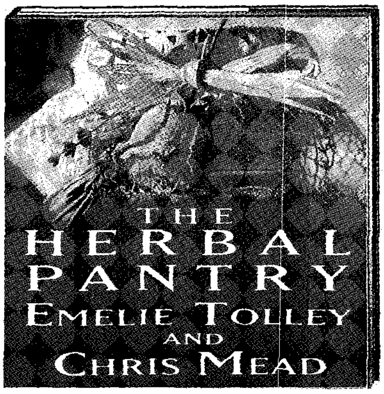

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and the indirect suggestion, the ordinary and the metaphysical. In "Dog Wearing Baby Clothes" Simic quotes Cornell's description of more than a hundred and fifty working files:

> *a diary journal repository laboratory, picture gallery, museum, sanctuary, observatory, key . . . the core of a labyrinth, a clearinghouse for dreams and visions . . . childhood regained.*

Cornell repeatedly sifted these elaborate dossiers in quest of lost time, seeking to recover, in Simic's words, "our old amazement."

The book has eight useful black-and-white illustrations, an abbreviated but deft chronology, and an epigraph from Gérard de Nerval—"Me? I pursue an image, no more"—which, despite its disclaimer, is like a blinking sign that says "Visionary at Work." Simic includes a poem by the Serbian poet Vasko Popa ("Now in the little box / You have the whole world in miniature") and cites passages by Breton, de Chirico, and Magritte, canonical exemplars of mystery. Cornell was himself an artist who referred continually to his own sources. Nerval was his particular hero, the hallucinatory mystic and precursor of the Surrealists, who was famous, as Simic notes, "for promenading the streets of Paris with a live lobster on a leash." The artist also loved Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, all alchemists of the word. Like Borges, Cornell was conscious of "inventing" his own precursors, who then served as touchstones and sacred figures. Like Wallace Stevens, he was a stay-at-home who loved the idea of romantic Europe, and especially France—a country he visited often in his mind. "The man who never travelled made up his own Baedeker," Simic writes, and many of the boxes feel like guidebooks in three dimensions, maps to another terrain.

Simic has a humane vision of art as consolation, a certainty that Cornell was trying "to construct a vehicle of reverie, an object that would enrich the imagination of the viewer and keep him company forever." In this book Simic becomes that ideal viewer and recipient, following the artist into imaginary hotels "frequented by phantoms." He watches as Cornell sets out from the family house on Utopia Parkway, knowing that the surveyor of the commonplace is also an interrogator of the ineffable, who isn't sure exactly where he is going or what he is looking for and so desperately needs to find. Perhaps there is a spiritual point where all contradictions can be resolved: "That point is somewhere in the labyrinth and the labyrinth is the city of New York." Simic presents Cornell as a man who basically "walks and looks." He dreams and watches people. In a piece called "The Romantic Movement" Simic summons up the figure of the discharged patient in Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd": "Who among us was not once that pursuer or that stranger?" Simic asks. "Cornell followed shopgirls, waitresses, young students 'who had a look of innocence.' I myself remember a tall man of uncommon handsomeness who walked on Madison Avenue with eyes tightly closed as if he were listening to music." In an entry titled after Wallace Stevens' poem "The Man on the Dump," Simic notes that Cornell "looked the way I imagine Melville's Bartleby to have looked the day he gave up his work to stare at the blank walls outside the office window." For Simic, Cornell resembles no one so much as those familiar-looking strangers in outmoded overcoats who haunt the city like ghosts: "They sit in modest restaurants and side-street cafeterias eating a soft piece of cake. They are deadly pale."

Simic's Cornell is also like Apollinaire ("the poet who loved street performers, musicians with cornets and tambourines, tightrope walkers, jugglers") and Rimbaud ("Arthur, poor boy, you would have walked the length of Fourteenth Street and written many more 'Illuminations' "). For the symbolist poet, eternity has been cut up and scattered into thousands of minuscule pieces. Cornell puts a few of them back together. Simic calls this "the quest for the lost and the beautiful." He writes:

> The disorder of the city is sacred. All things are interrelated. As above, so below. We are fragments of an unutterable whole. Meaning is always in search of itself. Unsuspected revelations await us around the next corner.

Simic believes that, like Whitman, Cornell "saw poetry everywhere." Simic's feeling for this aesthetic imperative and ideal—this way of life, really—is everywhere apparent, since he, too, is a somewhat ironic seeker and witness, an urban lookout. He observes, "On a busy street one quickly becomes a voyeur. An air of danger, eroticism, and crushing solitude plays hide-and-seek in the crowd. The indeterminate, the unforeseeable, the ethereal, and the fleeting rule there."

Once, in a moment of candor, Cornell said, "My work was a natural outcome of my love for the city," and some of Simic's most felicitous passages consider the implications of that basic premise. What he often sees in Cornell's boxes is a freeze-frame of Manhattan in the thirties, forties, or fifties—Cornell's very productive decades. In a particularly affecting piece, the poet peers into a see-through box depicting a window façade and discovers a luminous Hopperesque moment of urban peace:

> Early Sunday morning in June. It had rained after midnight, and the air and the sky have miraculously cleared. The avenues are empty and the stores closed. A glimpse of things before anyone has seen them.

Here Simic stands in Cornell's place and describes a city emptied of people, a world refreshed, renewed, and clarified.

SIMIC'S sense of isolation—his memory of being an immigrant—informs not only his reading of Cornell but also his understanding of the country we inhabit. "America is a place where the Old World shipwrecked. Flea markets and garage sales cover the land," he says in "Naked in Arcadia," and goes on:

> They should have made them undress and throw their possessions into the sea for the sake of an America where everybody goes naked, it occurs to me. My parents would be naked, too, posing for that picture in the Yellowstone Park with my father's much-prized Moroccan red fez.

One of the subtexts of this book is the link between art and loneliness, or, more specifically, the way the wanderer

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A KINDNESS

There once was a lady who kissed a shark—
Just once, near Ocean Park.
That's the Jersey shore,
I'd tell you more,
But you're better off left in the dark.

—BONNIE JACOBSON

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makes what he can out of what he happens upon. The modern artist collects fragments, things that other people throw away. Thus Simic defines an epiphanic instant of poetry: "Three mismatched shoes at the entrance of a dark alley." He recalls the first premise of collage technique—"You don't make art, you find it"—and concludes, "Every art is about the longing of One for the Other. Orphans that we are, we make our sibling kin out of anything we can find."

In "Medici Slot Machine," one of the book's strongest and most charming pieces, and one of the few that take their title from the art, the poet responds to a key work by constructing a separate but analogous universe. The center of Cornell's 1942 construction, his initiating masterwork, is a reproduction of a Renaissance "Portrait of a Young Noble." Black lines crisscross the surface, and the boy stares at us even as we locate him through a telescope lens or a gun sight. He is flanked by fragments of an old map of the Palatine Hill in Rome, which, in turn, are framed by vertical panels of film—strips of Renaissance faces, serial photos of the boy himself. Simic explains:

> The name enchants, and so does the idea—the juxtaposition of the Renaissance boy, the penny arcade, and the Photomat in the subway; what seem at first totally incompatible worlds—but then, of course, we are in Cornell's "magic regions" of Forty-second Street and Times Square.

Simic teases out the implications of the three realms Cornell has radically conjoined, creating a contiguous context for the imagery, daydreaming about the Renaissance princeling in a seedy urban landscape:

> The boy has the face of one lost in reverie who is about to press his forehead against a windowpane. He has no friends. In the subway there are panhandlers, small-time hustlers, drunks, sailors on leave, teen-aged whores loitering about. The air smells of frying oil, popcorn, and urine. The boy-prince studies the Latin classics and prepares himself for the affairs of the state. He is stubborn and cruel. He already has secret vices. At night he cries himself to sleep.

By projecting outward from the construction, Simic sends the prince—" 'He is as beautiful as a girl,' someone says"—into a hustling, shadowy, eroticized world where "blacks shine shoes, a blind man sells newspapers, young boys in tight jeans hold hands." None of these figures exist in the original box—they are Simic's invention. We follow the androgynous figure into the mirrored world of vending machines and then into the underground cityscape, where he represents "an angelic image in the dark of the subway." Simic's summary statement about the heterogeneous but unified character of the "slot machine" is an *ars poetica* that applies to the piece we are reading as well as the one we are looking at:

> Whatever it is, it must be ingenious. Our loving gaze can turn it on. A poetry slot machine offering a jackpot of incommensurable meanings activated by our imagination. Its mystic repertoire has many images.

In essence, "Dime-Store Alchemy" rotates on the axis of two perceptions of Cornell as a modernist in the American grain: an updated version of Poe and of Dickinson, one metamorphosing into the other. "Cornell and Dickinson are both in the end unknowable," Simic writes. "They live within the riddle, as Dickinson would say. Their biographies explain nothing. They are without precedent, eccentric, original, and thoroughly American."

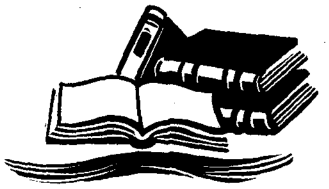
To appreciate fully Simic's reading of Cornell, you need to look hard again at Cornell's work, to peer into the looking glass of his objects and dream the boxes back into your hands. Reading this book reminded me time and again of the 1980 Cornell retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Emerging from that show, one felt the buoyant Americanness of Cornell's work, its totemic innocence and passionate inwardness, its reverence for the wayward magic of city life. It was like being swept back into the world by a giant revelatory wave. "Like a comic-book Spider-Man," Simic writes, "the solitary voyeur rides the web of occult forces."

"Dime-Store Alchemy" is a meeting of kindred spirits that is itself a work of art, and a tribute to a precisionist of longings and enigmas, an explorer who used the quotidiana of the past to investigate the secret recesses of the heart. ♦

THE BIRDING LIFE

[*From the Sanderling, newsletter of the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society*]

Twelve birders gathered at 8 AM on a clear, warm morning for a leisurely walk through the Salinas Sewage Ponds.



BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

The Certificate
by Isaac Bashevis Singer, translated from the Yiddish by Leonard Wolf (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22)

DAVID BENDIGER is a self-preoccupied loafer involved with three women he barely perceives through the scrim of his insecurities. Luckily for the women, each of them is looking to another man for love: Sonya, unschooled and from the countryside—and therefore not good enough for him, Bendiger believes—is contemplating marriage with a spats manufacturer she fears is not good enough for her; aristocratic, university-educated Minna is too good for the impoverished writer manqué that Bendiger is, though she is probably also too good for her rake of a fiancé; and Edusha, Bendiger's Communist landlady, pines for a revolutionary who has been arrested. In Eastern Europe after the First World War, jail is not an uncommon fate, nor are hunger, joblessness, and, for the Jews of Warsaw, limitations of liberty and means. The MacGuffin of the story is a certificate that will allow Bendiger to take one of these women to Palestine, but what is most piquant is the particular moment of culture captured here, when a generation was divided between Orthodox practices dating back thousands of years and a world of flappers, who were a bit of a shock to everyone.

GENERAL

Diderot: A Critical Biography
by P. N. Furbank (Knopf; $30)

THE talented English biographer believes that it has been difficult to see Diderot whole, because he did not publish his novels—"Rameau's Nephew," "Jacques the Fatalist," and "The Nun"—in his lifetime; although these works found an appreciative public in the nineteenth century, Diderot remained famous as a *philosophe* rather than as an imaginative writer. This biography does justice to Diderot's art and emphasizes his originality as a critic without slighting his historical importance as the chief editor of the Encyclopédie—a task to which he brought both creativity and courage, persisting in his work on that great project even after the government banned it. Mr. Furbank shows us Diderot as inexhaustibly sociable, compulsively helpful, and compellingly talkative. In places, his multifariousness and friendliness give the book a hurried and crowded feeling. Still, we are rushing in and out of theatres, printshops, and salons, and the crowd includes Voltaire, Catherine the Great, and Rousseau.

In My Place
by Charlayne Hunter-Gault (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $19)

ON a January day in 1961, the nineteen-year-old Charlayne Hunter and a companion named Hamilton Holmes, both of them black, showed up at the all-white University of Georgia to register for classes. In effect, this brave act desegregated the university and brought the state of Georgia into the civil-rights revolution. "In My Place" is Ms. Hunter-Gault's account of that experience, and the ugly and life-threatening reaction of much of the white community. It is also a memoir of a black girl's coming of age in the Deep South, and of a family that nurtured in her the self-esteem she would need in her confrontation with prejudice. It is written with humor, and good humor, but, understandably, with an edge. This book is a vivid retelling of history, and should take its place as one of the informal literary classics of the civil-rights movement.

To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign
by Stephen W. Sears (Ticknor & Fields; $24.95)

OF all the generals of the Civil War, none is more exasperating than George B. McClellan, who led a vast Union army to within sight of Richmond in the spring of 1862, and then began retreating in the face of an outnumbered and outgunned enemy. Early in the Peninsula campaign, when Confederate defenses were thin, McClellan had imagined huge forces in front of him, and slowed his drive, allowing Rebel reinforcements to arrive. The campaign was the first major engagement for many troops on both sides, and the novelty of the experience produced detailed descriptions in diaries and letters. Mr. Sears takes advantage of this to season his military history with telling incidents in the lives of common soldiers, whose pointless sufferings and squandered courage underscore McClellan's lassitude. The General avoided the battlefront and put more energy into writing self-serving cables to Washington than into directing his campaign. Also unfortunate for McClellan's reputation is the fact that his principal opponent at Richmond was Robert E. Lee, who made mistakes in the campaign but never showed himself unwilling to fight.

VERSE

Autobiographies
by Alfred Corn (Viking; $19)

THE second part of Alfred Corn's sixth book of poetry is a seventy-six-page narrative poem, "1992," which ambitiously attempts to paint a portrait of late-twentieth-century American life on the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery. Each section begins with the poet's recollection of a trip, often by car, through some part of the country, and ends with the creation of an American "type" living there: black lesbian hospital worker in Georgia, 7-Eleven stockboy in Idaho, Indiana factory worker on disability, and so on. Although in imagining these types the poet is earnestly sympathetic, the portraits are more often governed by romantic assumptions than by a real ear for regional or cultural idiosyncrasies. Mr. Corn's true imaginative talents are on full display in the powerful dramatic monologues of the first part of the book. In "My Neighbor, the Distinguished Count," a modern-day victim of Dracula lives through all the ages of love before he sucks her dry, and every tone—resistance, submission, dependence—is dead on. Not to be missed: the list of the Count's contemptuous gifts—"a rat, spitted and roasted," "a fistful of poison ivy Tied with catgut," and "a coiled blood sausage, Old, wizened, utterly dried out." ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

THE TWELVE TERRORS OF CHRISTMAS

by John Updike

1. **SANTA: THE MAN.** Loose-fitting nylon beard, fake optical twinkle, cheap red suit, funny rummy smell when you sit on his lap. If he's such a big shot, why is he drawing unemployment for eleven months of the year? Something scary and off key about him, like one of those Stephen King clowns.

2. **SANTA: THE CONCEPT.** Why would anybody halfway normal want to live at the North Pole on a bunch of shifting ice floes? Or stay up all night flying around the sky distributing presents to children of doubtful deservingness? There is a point where altruism becomes sick. Or else a sinister coverup for an international scam. A man of no plausible address, with no apparent source for his considerable wealth, comes down the chimney after midnight while decent, law-abiding citizens are snug in their beds—is this not, at the least, cause for alarm?

3. **SANTA'S HELPERS.** Again, what is really going on? Why do these purported elves submit to sweatshop conditions in what must be one of the gloomiest climates in the world, unless they are getting something out of it at our expense? Underclass masochism one day, bloody rebellion the next. The rat-a-tat-tat of tiny hammers may be just the beginning.

4. **O TANNENBAUM.** Suppose it topples over under its weight of explosive baubles? Suppose it harbors wood-borers that will migrate to the furniture? There is something ghastly about a tree—its look of many-limbed paralysis, its shaggy and conscienceless aplomb—encountered in the open, let alone in the living room. At night, you can hear it rustling and drinking water out of the bucket.

5. **TINY REINDEER.** Hooves that cut through roof shingles like linoleum knives. Antlers like a hundred dead branches. Unstable flight pattern suggesting "dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly." Fur possibly laden with disease-bearing ticks.

6. **ELECTROCUTION.** It's not just the frayed strings of lights anymore, or the corroded transformer of the plucky little Lionel. It's all those battery packs, those electronic games, those built-in dictionaries, those robots asizzle with artificial intelligence. Even the tinsel tingles.

7. **THE CAROLS.** They boom and chime from the vaulted ceilings of supermarkets and discount stores, and yet the spirits keep sinking. Have our hearts grown so terribly heavy since childhood? What has happened to us? Why don't they ever play our favorites? What *were* our favorites? Tum-de-tum-tum, angels on high, something something, sky.

8. **THE SPECIALS.** Was Charlie Brown's voice always so plaintive and grating? Did Bing Crosby always have that little potbelly, and walk with his toes out? Wasn't that Danny Kaye / Fred Astaire / Jimmy Stewart / Grinch a card? Is Vera-Ellen still alive? Isn't there something else on, like wrestling or "Easter Parade"?

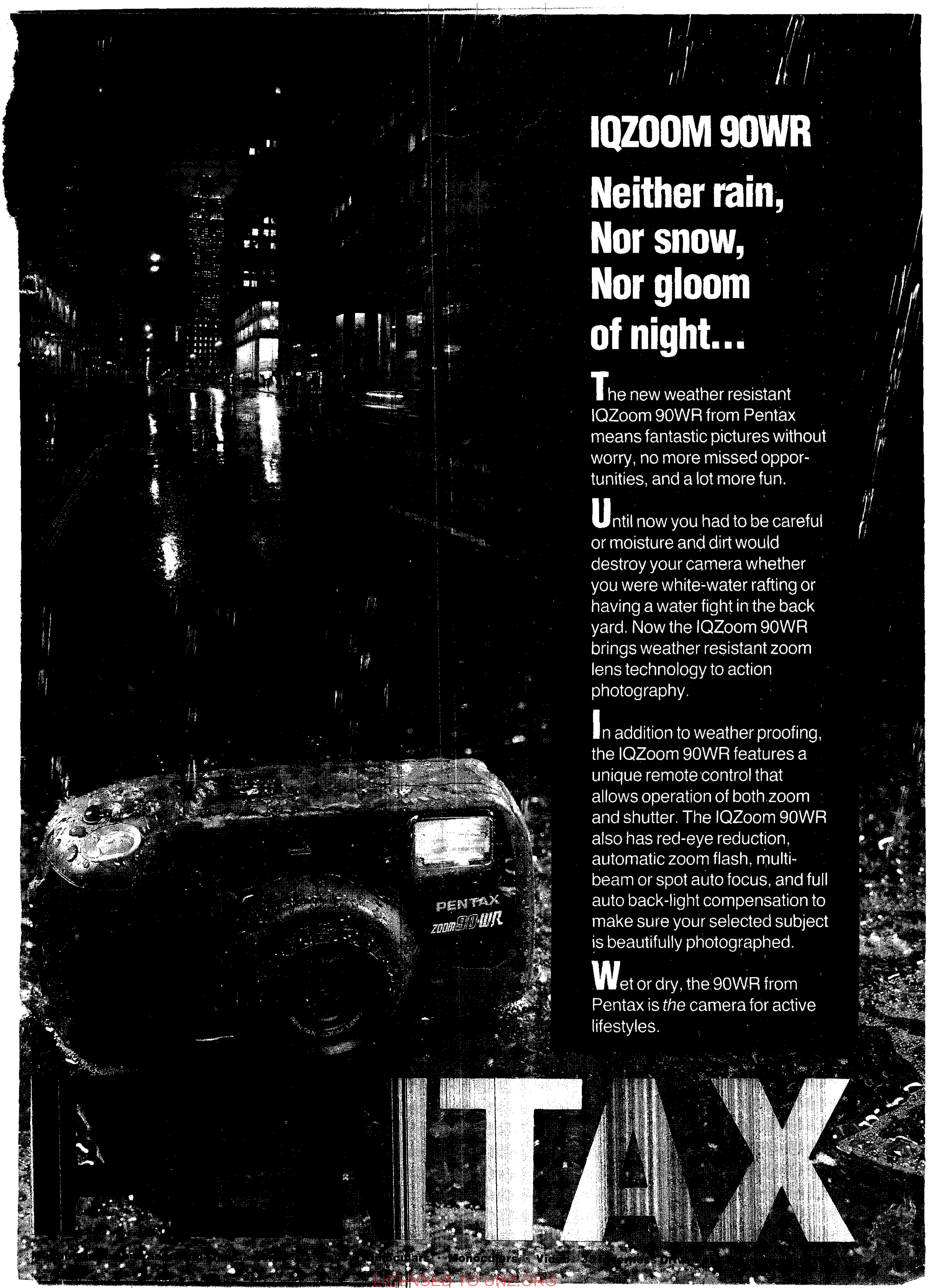
9. **FEAR OF NOT GIVING ENOUGH.** Leads to dizziness in shopping malls, foot fractures on speeded-up escalators, thumb and wrist sprain in the course of package manipulation, eye and facial injuries in carton-crowded buses, and fluttering sensations of disorientation and imminent impoverishment.

10. **FEAR OF NOT RECEIVING ENOUGH.** Leads to anxious scanning of U.P.S. deliveries and to identity crisis on Christmas morning, as the piles of rumpled wrapping paper and emptied boxes mount higher around every chair but your own. Three dull neckties and a pair of flannel-lined work gloves—is this really how they see you?

11. **FEAR OF RETURNS.** The embarrassments, the unseemly haggling. The lost receipts. The allegations of damaged goods. The humiliating descent into mercantilism's boiler room.

12. **THE DARK.** How early it comes now! How creepy and green in the gills everybody looks, scrabbling along in drab winter wraps by the phosphorous light of department-store windows full of Styrofoam snow, mockups of a factitious 1890, and beige mannequins posed with a false jauntiness in plaid bathrobes. Is this Hell or just an upturn in consumer confidence? ♦

A Christmas Carol



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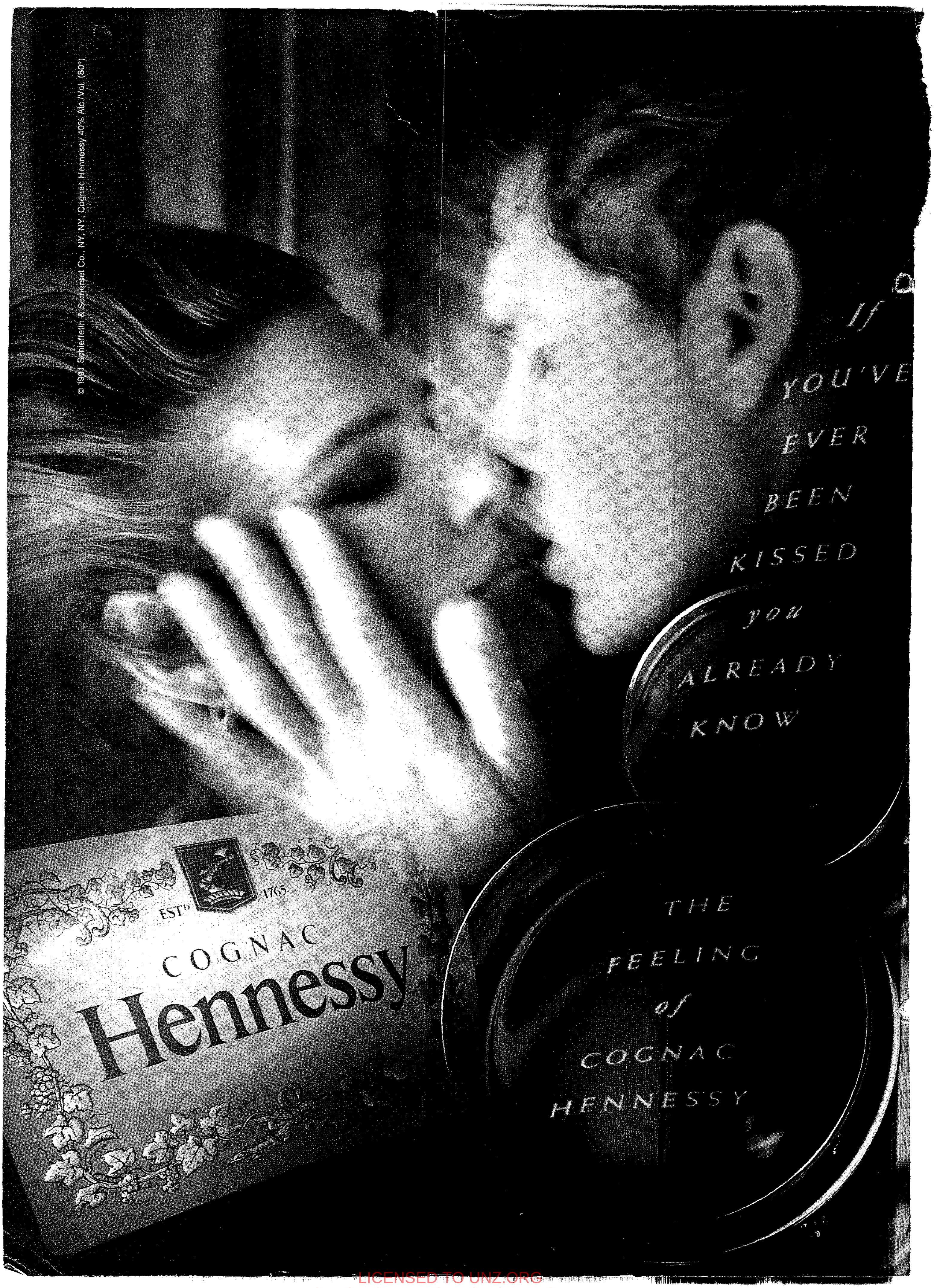
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